

PlayStation[®]

Official Magazine - Australia

MAY ISSUE 2009
www.gameplayer.com.au

FIRST LOOK!

HASTA LA VISTA, BABY

Raging against the machines
in Terminator Salvation

EXPOSED!

SHIFT HAPPENS

Need for Speed: SHIFT -
New developer, new direction

AUSSIE EXCLUSIVE!

BIOSHOCK 2

BIG SISTER UNVEILED

FOR THE FEMALE OF THE SPECIES IS MORE DEADLY THAN THE MALE!

VERDICT!

TURBO DIESEL

The Chronicles of Riddick
and Wheelman reviewed!

REVEALED!

GO TO HELL

To the bad fire and back
with Dante's Inferno

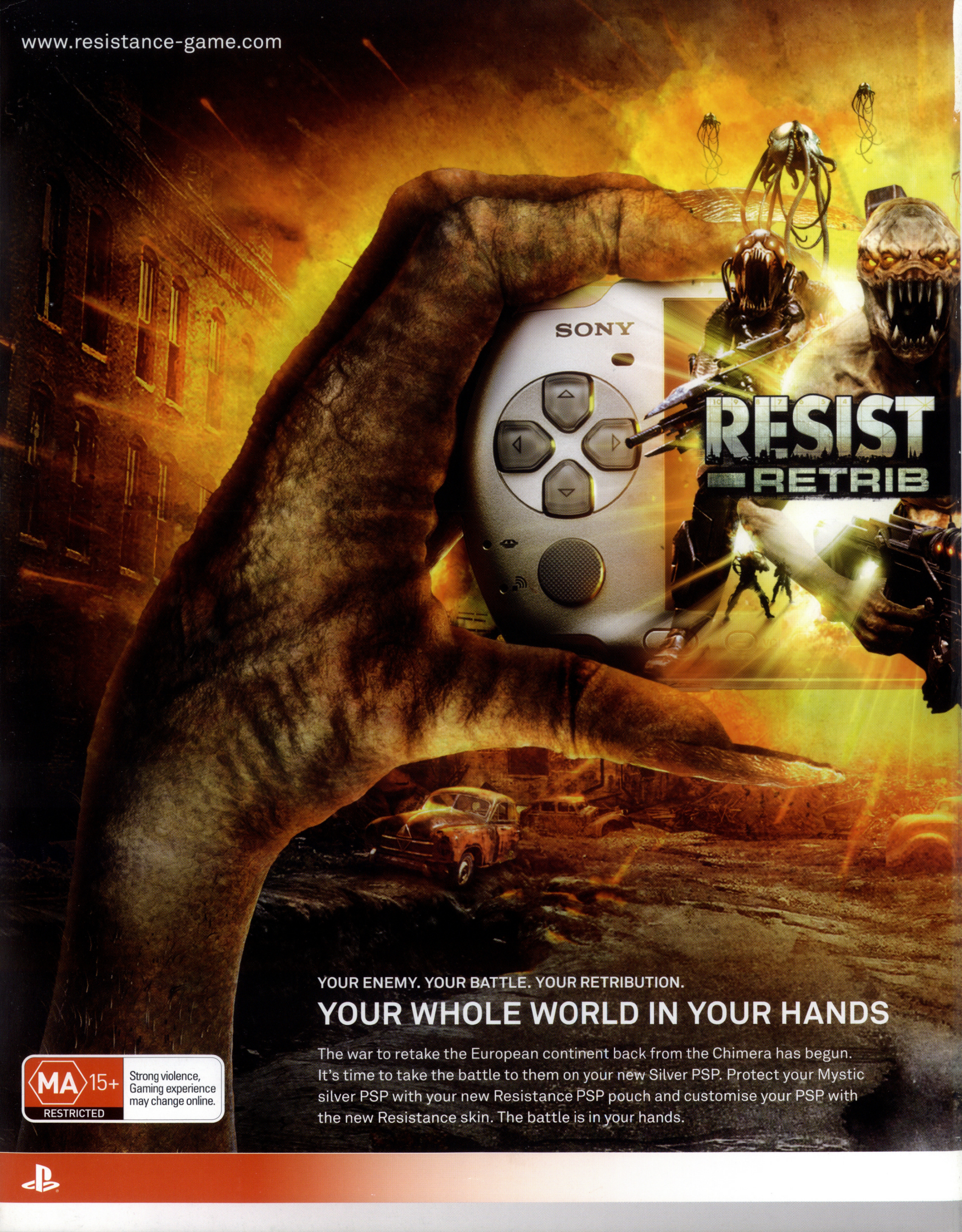
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OF 2009'S HOTTEST HITS!

- PROTOTYPE • RED DEAD REDEMPTION
- SPLIT/SECOND
- FUEL • RED FACTION: GUERRILLA • RUSE
- WANTED • RIDE TO HELL • FINAL FANTASY XIII
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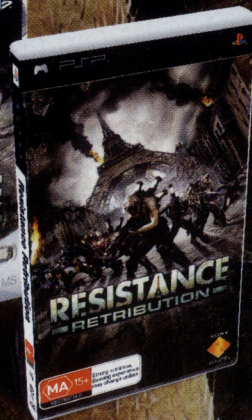
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“We need to trust you, the player, with harder choices and greater moral agency”

Jordan Thomas, *BioShock 2* Creative Director

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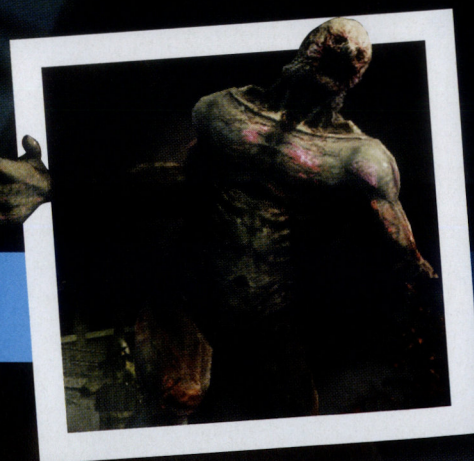
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Who knew
14th Century
poets were so
hardcore?

**DANTE'S
INFERNO**
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MARVEL





I can see why some celebrities get into games. They've got a lot of money, and very little to do with it. If I were rich and famous, making a game would certainly be on my list of things to do, right below booking Foo Fighters to play at my boy's first birthday party. Depending on how much of a prick all this fame and fortune had made me, I might even put myself in it. Thing is, though, making truly great games takes years.

My attention span doesn't last that long. Unless I really hired the right people, who'd maintain their enthusiasm long after mine faded, the game would invariably be rubbish. I'd throw money at it for a while, trying to make it better, and then I'd get over it. After a few years of playing half-arsed builds I'd decide it's fine. Just release it and get it out of my life, I'd declare.

I know this because of the number of half-finished projects laying about my house. A half-painted dog kennel. A 95 percent assembled plastic Spitfire. An un-illustrated kids book. Some people find it easy to see projects though all the way. Many don't.

This doesn't entirely explain why *Riddick* is so good, but it does illustrate why *Wheelman* is pretty rubbish. There would have been a point where I got bored too.

Remember when James Cameron got bored of making movies and spent a decade farting around under the ocean looking at shipwrecks? Remember when Ian Thorpe decided to stop swimming and do, whatever it is exactly that he does these days? They got itchy feet and started looking for thrills elsewhere.

Celebrities who dabble in gaming aren't immune from doing the same thing.

LUKE REILLY
EDITOR

PSN: Capt_Flashheart **PLAYING:** TOM CLANCY'S HAWX **WANTING:** MAX PAYNE 3

OPS ON: CELEBRITIES



STEPHANIE GOH

When I was fifteen I was convinced Keanu Reeves came from outer space. I mean, the dude believes in aliens! I bet he's one of them.

PSN: TBA

Playing: The Chronicles: Assault on Dark Athena
Wanting: Terminator Salvation



PAUL TAYLOR

True story: I used to deliver pizzas to Paul Mercurio when I was a teenager. Lovely bloke, fine dancer, though he politely refused to demo the Pase Doble when I asked him once.

PSN: paulgusta

Playing: Resident Evil 5
Wanting: Split/Second



JAMES COTTEE

Christopher Walken! He's been a Bond villain, a Batman villain, the Headless Horseman, McBain, AND that guy in *Pulp Fiction*. Walken for president!

PSN: DrWho3987

Playing: Patapon 2
Wanting: Batman: AA



JAMES ELLIS

Christopher Walken. In a past life he was Dr. Frankenstein, able to do the moonwalk. And some. Likes: horses, butter... flies. All that. What a cat. But who cares? Really.

PSN: gtfaster49

Playing: Street Fighter IV
Wanting: NG Sigma 2

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SHOUT OUTS: Phill, all the best, you're a legend mate :: KJR :: Vinnie :: Nicole



Gaming's latest and greatest

SPLIT/SECOND

Burnout – you have been warned

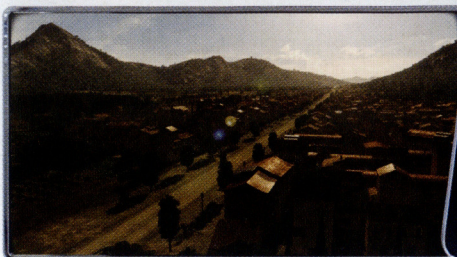
Black Rock studio, the mob that made the shamefully under-appreciated *Pure*, has announced a new racing game: *Split/Second*, due for release next year. Reading like a cross between the *Burnout* and the movie *Death Race*, *Split/Second* is part of a reality TV show that encourages winning by any means necessary. Racing in a city environment that can be destroyed on-the-fly, parts of the track can be blocked off or a new route created by triggering explosives. We're unsure whether that's by blowing up opponents or otherwise, but we are sure we're looking forward to going hands-on with this – we'll let you know as soon as we do.

R.U.S.E.

Teaching an old dog new tricks...

Another RTS is set to hit the PS3, but this one relies on your ability to work the smoke and mirrors on the battleground. Set in WWII and recreating integral battles throughout Europe and Africa, *R.U.S.E.* is both a macro- and micro-management strategy title promising detailed, personal fights from the level of a general up to god-like all-encompassing views of the battlefield. Made by the team who created the respectable PC strategy title, *Act of War*:

Direct Action, *R.U.S.E.*'s hook is the focus on pre-empting your enemy and fooling them with deception. What may appear to be tanks are visually convincing decoys, while spies and other dirty tactics – camouflage, radio silence, intoxication – are employable to trick your foes, as well the usual RTS array of vehicles, units and troops for Allied and Axis forces. We're intrigued and excited to see a new RTS series that isn't just a hard-hitting tank spam-fest.





13 Where to Now?
We have fond memories of playing with real LEGO as children, before it went all virtual. Check out the next (possible) batch of films to join the block party.



14 Around the World in PS3
Grandmas turn into vigilantes, a dude puts a camera where his eye should be and we find out your controller can make your skin lumpy. What a world.



WHAT'S HOT OR NOT

Too hot to handle? Or too cold to hold?



Vin Diesel
This guy's everywhere. He's so hot right now.

inFamous
We've been teased by the video, now we want play time.



The office PSP
Our mitts are all over *Resistance: Retribution*.

Mad Catz fighting sticks
These are fantastic for playing *SFIV*.



Sad chaps wanting this
...if you can find one, let us know.

Mass Effect 2
Not fair. Why aren't we invited to this party?



GTA: Lost and Damned
Yep, this is exclusive to Xbox. Boo!

IN SHORT...



Devil May Cry, Capcom's action saga that began on the PS2 in 2001, has shipped 10 million copies of all games in the series. Wow. This achievement compasses games on PlayStation as well as PC and Xbox.



Rumours from the UK suggest the PSP and PS3 will be given the chop. A price chop, that is. By how much we don't know, or when that'll trickle over to our shores.



In late-breaking news, *Max Payne 3* is set to be released at the end of the year. Rockstar Vancouver are in charge of development, and this is Max's "last chance for salvation" according to Rockstar's Sam Houser.

SCREENEST

SYPHON FILTER

Nobody saw it coming

The Director
John McTiernan

The Plot

Gabriel Logan and Lian Xing are operatives of a secret US agency on the trail of Erich Rhoemer, an international terrorist in possession of a designer virus called 'Syphon Filter'. 'Syphon Filter' is a deadly next-generation biological weapon capable of

targeting specific demographics and ethnic groups, and with no known antidote it's the single greatest threat to mankind since the A-bomb. Can Logan and Lian safely bustle their way through a horde of hired goons, professional trigger-men, double agents and world-class bad guys – from Washington D.C. to Kazakhstan – and avert World War III?

The Pitch

No-nonsense tough guy liquidates hordes of bad guys, saves the world. No romance, just killing.

Green Light or Development Hell?

Could go either way. We feel the cast works, but we're having second thoughts on our choice of director. Apparently McTiernan became quite paranoid after *Last Action Hero* tanked. He reportedly suspected that the bad buzz *Last Action Hero* received in the months leading up to its release was part of a deliberate campaign to ruin him. Unfortunately, the same thing happened to him when he remade *Rollerball* in 2002. He can make a killer film (*Die Hard*, *The 13th Warrior*, *Predator*, *The Hunt for Red October*), but he hasn't had much luck lately. He's even still in trouble with the FBI for a wiretapping scandal. He deserves a hit, but we're sniffing a little hell about this one. Maybe we should've chosen Michael Bay. Just kidding.

Best Line:

Lian Xing: "Oh my God, Gabe. I thought you'd been killed."
Gabe Logan: "Not yet."

The Cast:

Eric Bana as anti-terrorist hardcase Gabe Logan
Maggie Q as banging-hot sidekick Lian Xing
Samuel L. Jackson as international super-terrorist Erich Rhoemer
Laura Prepon as slippery Russian redhead Mara Aramov
Donald Sutherland as PHARCOM CEO Jonathan Phagan



MAD MAX ON THE BOIL

TAMING THE LAST OF THE V8 INTERCEPTORS

Australian film director George Miller has revealed that the *Mad Max* game he's working on with *God of War II* director Cory Barlog is around two years from completion.

Speaking to MTV, Miller (writer/director of the *Mad Max* series, and, no kidding, *Happy Feet*) said, "I've got a couple of years left. We're in the early stages writing and designing. A really good game you need two and half years."

He also said the divide between games and film as storytelling mediums is disappearing.

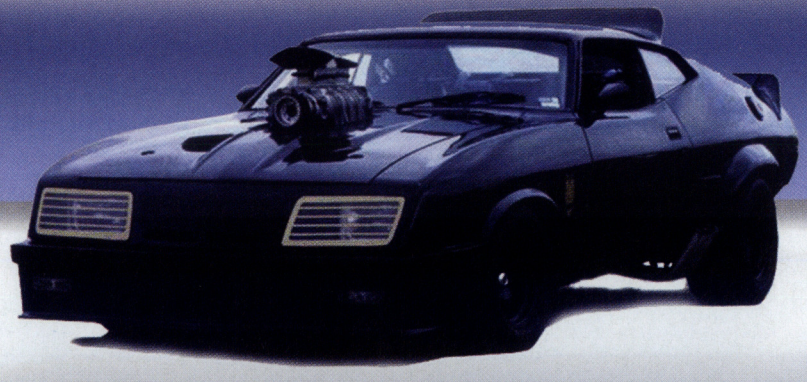
Miller was coy about what type of game *Mad Max* will be, but claimed it's a hybrid title. Whether he's referring to a mix of action and driving, or something else entirely, remains to be seen.

There's also no word on format or any development studio and/or publishing arrangements for the game yet.

Our only request? No Interceptor knock-offs, or sly US-friendly 'replacements'. Max's ride is an XB Falcon, and that's the way it ought to stay. She sips nitro, with Phase IV heads! 600 horsepower through the wheels! She's meanness set to music and the bitch is born to run! Cough. And so on.



Incidentally, Miller is also working on an animated *Mad Max* film to be released around the same time as the game. When we know more, you'll know more.



NUMBER CRUNCHING

63%

of adults do not know that Australia has no R18+ for videogames.

SEPARATED AT BIRTH

NO. 3 What does scientology say about zombies? – Tom Cruise

Clearly Tom Cruise has never played *Resident Evil Outbreak*, or we dare say his highly-trained mob of Hollywood lawyers would have turned up on Capcom's doorstep demanding a giant novelty cheque emblazoned with a figure starting with a number between one and nine and ending with a shitload of zeroes. Kevin Ryman looks more like Tom Cruise than Tom Cruise.



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TOP 10 FIRST TIMES

Everything has a first time, and we often wish some experiences could be first times, every time. Our favourites? Only too happy to share, and we reckon you liked the following as much as we did.



1 BLITZ METROPIA IN WIPEOUT HD

The PSP version was an entree, breeding familiarity with the layout, but didn't wrench our guts like the PS3 version. Once we were over the initial 'wow' of the HD graphics, Metropia swoops and turns into a rollercoaster about half a dozen corners in: the magnetic surface peels away, and as the nose of our craft turned 90 degrees down our heart and tonsils shook hands.



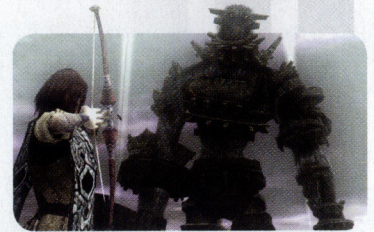
2 FINISH WITH AN ULTRA COMBO IN STREET FIGHTER IV

Tired of getting hammered when playing *SFIV* against sister-site Gameplayer, the first time we nailed an Ultra Combo finish on zero pixels of health was a pivotal moment; we were in love, and instantaneous students of the Tom Cruise school of couch-jumping. E. Honda is cheap, but he gets results.



3 SAVE A LITTLE SISTER IN BIOSHOCK

The first Big Daddy is down in a clanging metallic groan after a frantic battle of wits and firepower, and the music and tension have reached a crescendo: Atlas implores us to harvest the Little Sister, Tennenbaum begs us to save her. Pick one, and live with the choice. Kudos to you if you didn't slap at your controller when choosing. We may have. Just saying.



5 SEE A COLOSSUS IN SHADOW OF THE COLOSSUS

With barely any back story explaining our situation we're told to eliminate the various colossi that reside in pockets of the land. Moments after scrambling up a cliff face, a giant stone hoof smashes into the ground, filling most of the screen. The camera shifts up and up; the beast turns, makes eye contact, and the sheer scale of the task ahead became overwhelmingly daunting.



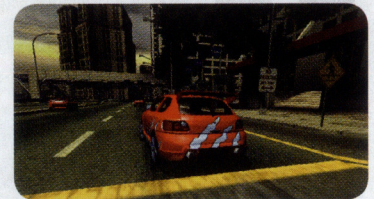
4 SWAN DIVE IN ASSASSIN'S CREED

We'd picked our way through the crowds, past the vigilant guards and made it unscathed up a tower that would give Alain Robert palpitations, and now the sprawl of Jerusalem lay below. Swan-diving into hay bale that's alarmingly askew to where we were placed and god-knows how far below was the best reward for our careful work. Screaming towards the hay our tonsils and ticker though about shacking up.



6 LEAP OFF THE MURDERHORN IN SKATE 2

If we ever meet the man, woman or beast responsible for the creation of New San Vanelona's great big dam we're going to give them a great big hug. We can't really think of another game where doing the exact same thing 200 times in a row over the course of one afternoon could keep six gamers thoroughly entertained. It's *Skate's* Mega-Ramp, times 100. Dropping in for the first time gave us shivers.



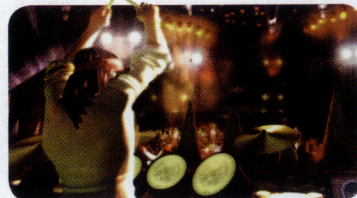
7 USE A WHOLE BURNOUT IN BURNOUT 2

Already in control, loosely, of a car that lives life sideways with the speedo cranking clockwise while the traffic honks and flashes wildly. Near misses and powerslides have drip-fed the burnout bar and a moment after mashing **LB** the camera shifts focus, the controller kicks sharply, and suddenly the world's going backwards. Torching through the whole bar, intact, never gets old.



8 GET INTO YOUR FIRST CAR IN GTA: VICE CITY

The graphics are sharp, the protagonist's outfit is sharper and the garish neon calls like a coked-up siren's song to explore and exploit the delights of Vice City. Tommy Vercetti sits in a car for the first time and the iconic percussion and bass-line of Jackson's 'Billie Jean' comes on the radio. It felt like a happy accident, and was instant immersion into a dirty, wonderful spiral. Welcome to the '80s. We can feel the goose bumps now.



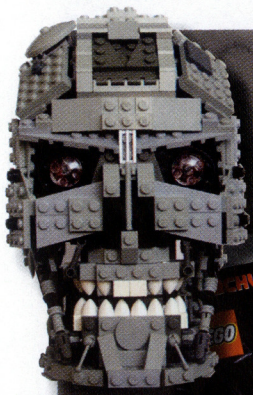
9 NAIL A BIG ENDING IN ROCK BAND

The big endings are just one of the many reasons *Rock Band* crushes *Guitar Hero World Tour* into a fine powder, and they contribute greatly to why *Rock Band* is far better four-player co-operative experience. Nailing a big ending at the end of a huge set by thrashing at the drums, wailing into the mic and stabbing wildly at the solo buttons on the guitars (and banking the points) is a religious experience. Maybe God DID give rock and roll to us.



10 SCREAM AT THE DOGS JUMPING THROUGH THE WINDOW IN RESIDENT EVIL

On our own in a house the Addam's family would call weird and a chap with most of his skin missing just tried to give us some chronic pash-rash. Neatly ducking out of there into an L-shaped corridor and belting towards the opposite end, dogs from Hell leapt through the glass, turning usually composed gamers in to a gibbering wreck. Those bloody mutts got us every time.



LEGO TERMINATOR: I'LL BE BLOCK

EXPLAIN YOURSELF...

This would be the darkest LEGO story committed to disc, but still soundly follows a hero/anti-hero storyline whilst capturing the cult of Terminator and LEGO.

THE STORY

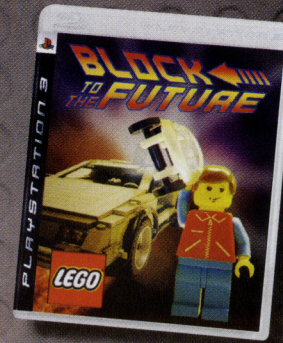
Mad-arse robots, a sinewy heroine and some plucky smart-mouth kid jump around in time between 1984, 1995, 2004 and 2029. The changes in fashion represented in block form would be astounding.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Multi-tiered: plenty of vehicular sections; blasting through the mall in T2; surfing the liquid nitrogen tanker; taking out several city blocks (cough) with a crane in T3. Don't expect it to lull too much.

PROBABILITY

50-50. Though there aren't enough LEGO blocks in the world to count for all the guys blown away by Arnie, Salvation's going to be out soon – a tie in would work nicely.



LEGO BACK TO THE FUTURE: BLOCK TO THE FUTURE

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

Seamless sections rolled into a decent adventure. Jump on a hoverboard, drive the DeLorean and set up an elaborate scientific train heist. Huey Lewis and the News would be playable characters.

PROBABILITY

If OPS had anything to do with it, it'd be made already.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF...

This fits perfectly with the LEGO aesthetic: two lovable characters, a constant and consistent bad-guy and his mini posse of chumps to defeat throughout the series and loads of toys to do it with.

THE STORY

Mirroring the film's overall plotlines plus an unofficial part IV with the Doc's kids, Jules and Verne, as they cause chaos in the locomotive. Gamers would utter "Oooh so that's how he made it hover".



WHERE TO NOW?

Moving from crappy low-budget kiddie racing games on the PC to tackling childhood-favourite film franchises was a smart move, though *LEGO Star Wars* is still the best. Here are a few more we reckon developers should look at.

LEGO ROCKY: BLOCKY

EXPLAIN YOURSELF...

A LEGO brawler would be a distinct turn for the series, though we see this being part biff and part exploration. True story: Sylvester Stallone wrote the first *Rocky* film. Put him back in control of the script, and *Blocky* is born.

THE STORY

With Stallone at the writing helm dialogue won't be a problem: fists will do the talking. Ultimately, this would be best suited to truly flesh out the side stories of Drago, Clubber Lang and Apollo Creed.

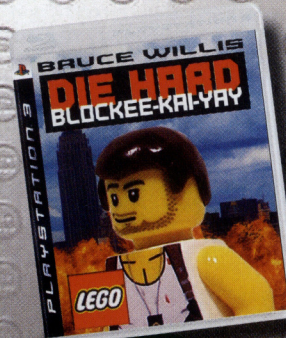
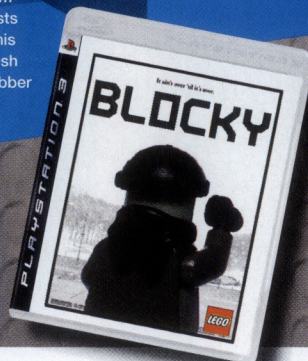
HOW WILL IT PLAY?

An absolute tonne of punching meat in warehouses, running up and down stairs and training on the beach, punctuated by some radical fighting.



PROBABILITY

Rocky's whole life was a million-to-one shot. So is this.



LEGO DIE HARD: BLOCKEE- KAI-YAY

THE STORY

Sticking close to the plot and story of the four films, this follows McClane's adventures across the USA in an all-action boom-fest.

HOW WILL IT PLAY?

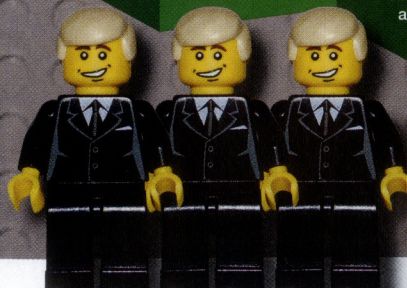
Action, action, action. Despite losing zippy one-liners in the mute LEGO universe, the visual gag of McClane's avatar getting balder and balder 'til all that's left is a yellow nub sits well with us.

PROBABILITY

At first this was a dead-cert, but being LEGO it would have to ditch the gratuitous blood, coarse language and subversive racism. Low, then.

EXPLAIN YOURSELF...

John McClane is all action and, granted, he destroys more than he creates. An ace demolition system where buildings fall apart brick by brick would look spectacular.



AROUND THE WORLD IN PS3

OPS trawls high and low for what's going on around the globe in gaming

EAST FORT WORTH, USA
GRAN VAL RENFRO
And we thought this could only happen in Liberty City. After having her purse stolen, 65-year-old grandmother Val Renfro thought like a gamer to get it back – by running over the thief in her car. As Renfro was about to get in to her car after finishing her shopping, Ricky Lee Sample snatched Renfro's purse and took off. "I didn't think about anything else except, 'He's not going to get away with this'," she said. Despite flooring it out of the car park and clipping him with her car Sample fled, though Renfro was lucky enough to recruit some passers-by who tackled him to the ground before re-uniting Renfro with her purse.

LAHOLM, SWEDEN
WORLD OF WAR-CRACK
A report from addiction therapists at Sweden's Youth Care Foundation has labelled the massive PC hit *World Of Warcraft* to be 'the crack cocaine of the video gaming world'. In early March a 15-year-old boy Swedish boy played *WoW* for 24 hours and collapsed. Report author Sven Rollenhagen said, "There is not a single case of game addiction that we have worked with in which *World of Warcraft* has not played a part. Some people are literally unable to drag themselves away and will play it 'til they drop."

GLOUCESTER, ENGLAND
LIFE IMITATES ART, SAYS YOU SMELL
And we thought *this* could only happen on *Saint's Row*. An Algerian chemist has been charged with spraying a bookstore and a pub in England with a combination of his own faeces and urine. 42-year-old Sahnoun Daifallah filled a 1.5-litre weed killer spray container hidden in a modified laptop bag before embarking on his stinky rampage. Daifallah will be sentenced after psychiatric reports have been completed, however it's likely he will be deported.

GENEVA, SWITZERLAND
AN ABSOLUTE SKINFUL
PlayStation has a new dubious honour: a new skin condition has just been named after it. Labelled "PlayStation palmar hidradentitis" by Swiss scientists, the condition is caused by gripping the controller too tightly and mashing buttons, and can lead to uncomfortable lumps on the palms. Discovered after a young girl was admitted to a Geneva hospital with the strange lesions only on her hands, doctors found she had been playing games on her PlayStation for multiple hours in a day. She fully recovered after 10 days. OPS says you should put down the games and take a 15-minute break every hour.

TORONTO, CANADA
EYE EYE
And you thought *Solid Snake* and Sam Fisher had all the cool toys. Canadian filmmaker Rob Spence will have a mini camera built in to his prosthetic eye in an attempt to highlight the many levels of surveillance in society. Project Eyeborg will see him put a battery, wireless transmitter and camera on a mini circuit board. "Originally the whole idea was to do a documentary about surveillance," said Spence, "I thought I would become a sort of super hero ... fighting for justice against surveillance".

INTERNATIONAL CHARTS



UK

Source: ELSPA

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Resident Evil 5 | Capcom |
| 2 | Killzone 2 | Sony |
| 3 | WWE Legends of Wrestlemania | THQ |
| 4 | Street Fighter IV | Capcom |
| 5 | Tom Clancy's HAWX | Ubisoft |
| 6 | FIFA 09 | EA |
| 7 | Call of Duty: World at War | Activision |
| 8 | SEGA Mega Drive Collection | Sega |
| 9 | LittleBigPlanet | Sony |
| 10 | Grand Theft Auto IV | Rockstar |



JAPAN

Source: VGChartz

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|--------------|
| 1 | Musou Orochi Z | Koei |
| 2 | Biohazard 5 | Capcom |
| 3 | Ryu Ga Gotoku 3 | Sega |
| 4 | Demon's Soul | Sony |
| 5 | Gundam Musou 2 | Namco Bandai |
| 6 | Street Fighter IV | Capcom |
| 7 | Gran Turismo 5 Prologue | Sony |
| 8 | World Soccer Winning Eleven 2009 | Konami |
| 9 | Tomb Raider: Underworld | Spike |
| 10 | Midnight Club: Los Angeles | Spike |



USA

Source: NPD

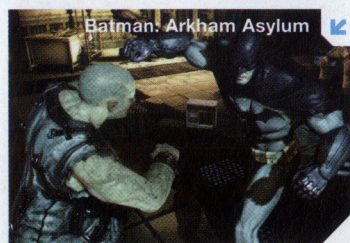
- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|------------|
| 1 | Resident Evil 5 | Capcom |
| 2 | Killzone 2 | Sony |
| 3 | MLB 09: The Show | Sony |
| 4 | Street Fighter IV | Capcom |
| 5 | Call of Duty: World at War | Activision |
| 6 | Tom Clancy's HAWX | Ubisoft |
| 7 | Major League Baseball 2K9 | 2K |
| 8 | Skate 2 | EA |
| 9 | Resistance 2 | Sony |
| 10 | SOCOM: U.S. Navy SEALs Confrontation | Sony |

RELEASE SCHEDULE

Coming soon to a store near you...

MARCH 2009

- PS3**
The Chronicles of Riddick: AODA
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Eat Lead
GENRE: HORROR | DISTRIBUTOR: AFA
- PS3**
Resident Evil 5
GENRE: HORROR | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
Stormrise
GENRE: RTS | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
- PS3**
Tom Clancy's HAWX
GENRE: FLIGHT | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- PS3**
Wheelman
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
- PS3**
WWE Legends of WrestleMania
GENRE: FIGHTING | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ



- PS3**
Guitar Hero: Metallica
GENRE: PARTY | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3**
Heroes over Europe
GENRE: FLIGHT | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
I Am Alive
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- PS3**
Infamous
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
MAG (Massive Action Game)
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
SuperCar Challenge
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
- PS3**
UFC 2009: Undisputed
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ

JUNE 2009

- PS3**
Ghostbusters
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI

LATE/TBC 2009

- PS3**
Aliens: Colonial Marines
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
- PS3**
Battlefield: Bad Company 2
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3**
Bayonetta
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA

- PS3**
BioShock 2
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
- PS3**
Colin McRae DiRT 2
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Darksiders: Wrath of War
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
Fight Night Round 4
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: EA
- PS3**
Final Fantasy XIII
GENRE: RPG | DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
- PS3**
God of War III
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
Gran Turismo 5
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
Heavy Rain
GENRE: ADVENTURE | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
- PS3**
IL-2 Sturmovik: Birds of Prey
GENRE: FLIGHT | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC
- PS3**
Just Cause 2
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Mafia II
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: 2K
- PS3**
Prototype
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3**
Red Dead Redemption
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR
- PS3**
Red Faction: Guerrilla
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
Singularity
GENRE: SHOOTER | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION
- PS3**
Tekken 6
GENRE: FIGHTING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Uncharted 2: Among Thieves
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: SONY

MAY 2009

- PS3**
Bionic Commando
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
- PS3**
Virtua Tennis 2009
GENRE: SPORTS | DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
- PS3**
X-Men Origins: Wolverine
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION

MID 2009

- PS3**
Afro Samurai
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
Batman: Arkham Asylum
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
FUEL
GENRE: RACING | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
- PS3**
The Godfather II
GENRE: ACTION | DISTRIBUTOR: EA

QUOTE UNQUOTE

Industry chatter, inside tips and loose lips



"PixelJunk Eden made its return on investment within 24 hours," **Susan Panico**, Sr. Director of the Playstation Network at Sony, in between money fights and showering in wads of cold hard cash.



"Perhaps the next *Call of Duty* game will have you unlock achievements for petting the dogs you encounter and going on walks or playing Frisbee with them." **Joel Bartlett** of PETA hates killing digital Nazi attack dogs.



"This will be the ultimate package, the one you will always remember." **Yosuke Hayashi**, producer of *Ninja Gaiden Sigma II*, on the quality of the upcoming game. Sooooo, there's not going to one after this, that's better?



"I was ashamed about the fact I was a gamer." **Actor Vin Diesel** talking to Jonathan Ross on Ross's show when asked about the *Riddick* movie/game link. Don't fight it Vin - you're one of us!

AUSTRALIAN CHARTS

Source: GfK



1 Resident Evil 5



2 Killzone 2



3 Tom Clancy's HAWX



4 SEGA Ultimate Collection



5 Street Fighter IV



6 Grand Theft Auto IV



7 Guitar Hero World Tour



8 FIFA 09



9 Call of Duty World at War



10 Need for Speed Undercover



OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
LUKE REILLY



GAMEPLAYER.COM.AU
MARK SERRELS

VS

Is bigger better? It's a question people have been asking for eons. Size does matter, size doesn't matter – opinion is evenly divided. When it comes to games, however, who comes up trumps? Big and bold or small and concentrated? Well, let's find out, shall we? **FIGHT!**

MARK: All right, listen up Luke. I'll tell you what I told Mrs. Serrels: bigger is not necessarily better – in fact on many occasions smaller is actually better. I reckon that if game developers take a smaller focus they're more likely to fill that focus with sweet, sweet detail – what say thee to that Mr. Reilly?

LUKE: *GTA IV*.

MARK: Oh sweet. Thanks man. That's awesome – you inadvertently fell head first into my well construed trap. *GTA IV* is the perfect example of what I'm talking about, because as opposed to the bloated mish mash of San Andreas, with *GTA IV* Rockstar reduced the franchises scope from state to city, and stuffed it full of detail and life. That's why it was so awesome! Hahaha! You dug your own grave.

LUKE: Dude, that's a total oversimplification. You can't have you cake and eat it too – there's nothing small about *GTA IV*. Trap huh? It seems you've nibbled your way along along my trail of shortbread directly underneath my cardboard box-on-a-stick-with-string. *GTA IV* is awesome, and stuffed with of detail and life, you say?

But *GTA IV* is big! Your house of cards is teetering friend. Thing is, the map in *San Andreas* was five times the size of the map in *GTA III* (which, at the time, was a mammoth achievement in massive and dynamic open worlds). Yet, the state of San Andreas was still packed with an equal or greater amount of detail to *GTA III*'s Liberty City. Thus, methinks you're being a tad presumptuous assuming that a bigger Liberty City in *GTA IV* would've blown dogs for quarters. Judging by past trends, it's entirely probable that the next *GTA* title will be bigger, and still include the same unparalleled richness and detail that *GTA IV* boasts.

MARK: Even if a bigger *GTA* somehow managed to, as you mentioned, not blow dogs for quarters, it would still be the exception that proved the proverbial rule. Look at other games that got far too big for their boots – *Far Cry 2* is a good example, that game is buggier than a hobo's beard, all because Ubisoft attempted to make a game that was beyond its scope and made a bear's arse of it. Now compare that to a game like *Call of Duty 4* – a game that narrows its focus and provides something altogether more

cinematic and polished; or *Halo 3*, which takes it's basic 30 seconds of fun and stretches it skullcap tight over some of the most epic encounters in gaming history. There's an old saying usually espoused by old geezers drowning in nasal hair, and it goes a little something... like this... jack of all trades, master of none. Too many games, in an attempt to tick all the boxes, end up ticking me off.

LUKE: I thought the consensus that *Far Cry 2* was quite good? Didn't it garner mostly respectable reviews? Anyway, I like big worlds, and clearly plenty of punters do too. I like the feeling of being a small fish in a big pond, rather than a pair of hands speeding down a few hours of nicely-detailed corridors. These larger, breathing worlds tend to be far more immersive. *Call of Duty 4* is an absolutely fantastic game, but it's all smoke and mirrors. Take the player out and there's no meat on the bones – just a whole bunch of enemies facing your last known direction. Take the player out of an open-world title like *GTA IV* or *Far Cry 2*, and everything continues as usual. It's all an illusion too, but it's far more convincing. I've spent over 100 hours inside Liberty City as a tiny, lone instigator

– poking the world simulation and seeing what happens when it pokes back.

MARK: Don't get me wrong, games of a smaller scope don't necessarily need to hand holding exercises in banality. A great example is the *Metal Gear Solid* series – games, smaller in size, set in unbelievably detailed worlds that come to life through multiple playthroughs. There's more detail and gameplay in a single 100 square feet on some areas of *MGS IV* than there is in some open world titles period.

LUKE: Some, sure, but not all. There's also more detail and gameplay in a few square blocks of *GTA IV* than some corridor shooters. I guess a good game is a good game, right?

MARK: Ah, I see – we're rounding off this argument in a compromising, sum-up manner, that enables both of us to save face, right? I've run out of points so I'm totally down with that. So, yes. A good game is a good game, regardless of size

LUKE: Let's not keep fighting.

MARK: We'll see.

DON'T TURN A NIGHT OUT



70 Australians under 25 will be hospitalised
due to alcohol-caused assault in an average week.

www.australia.gov.au/drinkingnightmare



INTO A NIGHTMARE

OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
ANGRY SACKBOY

ACTING YOUR AGE

A few weeks ago I was in a fast-food outlet. It was late in the evening and was the only thing open, so it was proving to be somewhat of a guiding star to more than just myself and the gaggle of *OPS* staffers and sympathisers with me at the time. It was a beacon of burger-scented excellence for Bondi Junction's Friday night finest, so there was a modest crowd of diverse patrons. It was here, bathed in coloured light and with the smell of chilli and chips assaulting my senses I realised something.

I'm developing somewhat of a problem with young people.

Now, I'm not here to alienate the large amount of young people who read this very magazine, nor am I fishing for a hearty round of backslapping for any similarly minded older readers. I like to think I could swap war stories with the vast majority of both camps.

Fact is, however, I don't recall any point in my own youth where I would've a) worn a knitted beret and felt tough and b) proceeded to disrespect a large group of hungry and Canadian Club-lubricated

men twice my age in said beret. This likely stemmed from a mixture of general respect and self-preservation.

I've noticed, unfortunately, over the past few years kids are growing up with less and less of either.

Amongst other things, I blame games.

Wait, hear me out.

A 15-year-old today wouldn't have even been self-aware when the PlayStation was released. They wouldn't have even been a twitch in a testisatchel when games used to be primarily designed to actively STOP you beating them. So, the games 15-year-olds have been weaned on are easy, short and usually have an ultra-competitive online component. As such, kids are now used to having everything their way, think they're invincible and have had a lot of practise swearing and teabagging over the internet.

Give a kid a hat, wants to be a cowboy. Kids feel like they're entitled to act like this.

There IS actually a difference between being cheeky and being a shithead. Beret boy and his posse of emo-tweens sat

firmly in the latter category. I imagine he and his sorority could easily have been the same delinquents who were screaming insults at me during *Warhawk* recently. Probability states they almost certainly weren't, but that's not the point.

My question is, did anyone anticipate this side-effect?

Because it's clearly our fault.

Games, see, are primarily made by people my age and older – but they seem to turning kids into monsters. You may think it's funny to watch YouTube videos of kids cracking it over their games and tearing verbal strips off strangers who have the audacity to be better at something than they are, but the truth is this is significantly worrying. Kids shouldn't BE this angry, and

they certainly shouldn't be this insulting. Even if there's a larger cultural force at work here than just games, games are certainly contributing to this.

Beret and crew slunk out shortly after some mild intimidation. All mouth, no trousers, you could say. Unfortunately, they'll probably be just as quick to go ballistic online.

Anybody who's copped a spray from some high-pitched adolescent who should've had homework to do will likely agree.

Angry Sackboy is an ex-videogame journalist with a bone to pick. His views do not necessary match those of *OPS*. He's expecting your hate-mail.

“Bathed in coloured light and with the smell of chilli and chips assaulting my senses I realised something. I'm developing somewhat of a problem with young people”

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-GAMEPRO



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PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX LIVE



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OFFICIAL PLAYSTATION
ANTHONY O'CONNOR

READ MY CHEEKS

The mag gets a lot of mail, feedback and – occasionally – fruit baskets, thanking us for writing ‘good’ reviews. That got me to thinking, what makes a ‘bad’ review?

Little Baby Jeebus *knows* I’ve read a lot of bad ones. Usually on the Internet but sometimes in mags that should know better (not us, we’re splendid). So what makes ‘em bad?

I had to drink two whole six packs just to get my head around it (oh, Luke, that’ll be on the invoice [burp]) and I think I’ve got it nailed: reviews are opinions. Magazines and print media in general like to pretend we offer objective reviews but unless you’re a robot, the writer’s personality always seeps into the copy.

No, admitting you’re a HU-MAN BEING doesn’t make a bad review. Nor does one you disagree with. Just because you might think *Pure* is better than *MotorStorm*: *Pacific Rift* doesn’t make you right, but it doesn’t make you wrong either.

Reviews are court room dramas. The lawyer states his case and then backs it up with evidence.

In this case I would say: “*MotorStorm: Pacific Rift* is an amazing achievement, i.e. It improves on the original without losing the wild, renegade spirit that make the first game so much fun. The graphics alone are jaw-droopingly smooth. The vehicles are varied – motorbike, buggy, racing truck and now a bloody monster truck to name but four. The physics feel just right – and the sense of speed and sheer track size is both humbling and exciting. Choosing to use the four elements – fire, water, earth

and air – was brilliant and guarantees an embarrassment of diverse, exciting tracks. A winner on every level. It’s lucky too, because I was getting sick of running around the loungeroom, with my undies on my head, making car noises. True story.”

See, I made a case, I cited actual elements and concluded the argument. Resting my case, as it were. Now let’s do the same game, really badly:

“*MotorStorm: Pacific Rift* is the shizzle. It’s the nizzle, grizzle and pizzle too*. The island is really big**. The tracks are good too***. And there are heaps of new features****. Fans of the series will love this new addition to the *MotorStorm* franchise*****.”

* Apart from not being terribly funny, that tells us nothing.

** We need a frame of reference. My mum’s cat is really big. Is there a track on my mum’s cat?

*** Good how? Well behaved or well designed?

**** Care to mention ANY of them?

***** Of course fans of the series will like it – they’re fans!

Finally a review is not the score. The score is to capture your eye and interest you. But one man’s 10 is another man’s 4 so read those little squiggly things between the pictures. ‘Words’, I believe they’re called.

That’s me, gang. Happily the reviews you’ll find in this issue are belters one and all.

But then again, that’s just my opinion. And as always: if you don’t want the pig, don’t rattle the bucket.

Anthony O’Connor is trying harder.

“Opinions are like arseholes, everyone’s got one”

– Cessnock Rest Stop, men’s toilet stall door (the middle one)



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Speak to us!

LETTER OF THE MONTH!

UPSIDE-DOWN

Silent Hill: Homecoming. I'm sure you all know what I'm about to spew acid over: THE INVERTED CONTROLS BUG!!!! Konamiiiiii, you gots some 'splainin to doooooo! Yes, it angers me so much, I must use capitals, four exclamation marks and quote something anyone under the age of 25 would look at me stupidly and go, "Huhhhhhh?" with that creepy dull cow eye stare. Anyway, back to the topic at hand.

What the hell Konami? Don't get me wrong, I love Konami and believe they are one of the greatest things to ever happen to the PlayStation ever since MGS and Silent Hill on PSone, but I guess even the greatest love affair has its hiccups.

I have been waiting and waiting eagerly for SH:H for ages, as have most of the gaming community, pre-ordered it and all that jazz, even after the release date was annoyingly pushed back another month. Finally I got it, excited about all the scary pant-filling moments I was about to indulge in. I took it home, put it in my PS3, loaded it up, and like any normal gamer, I go to the options menu and configure my options, as it were. All the normal stuff, turn all the volume levels up full, turn the subtitles on, so as to not miss one sound or piece of dialogue and last but not least, turned on inverted controls (because we all know, it's the only way, ever, to play any game and anyone who thinks otherwise probably needs a catscan or something of that nature. Lobotomy comes to mind). So, happy with my tinkering, I finally started the game. Taking in all the loverrrrry disturbyness of it all, until it comes time to take control of young Alex and guide him on his decent into madness and the like... only to find that when I tried to look around, checking out the surroundings, the controls were not inverted. Now, I'm sure I inverted my controls, I do every time I start a new game, but just to humour myself, I went and

checked.

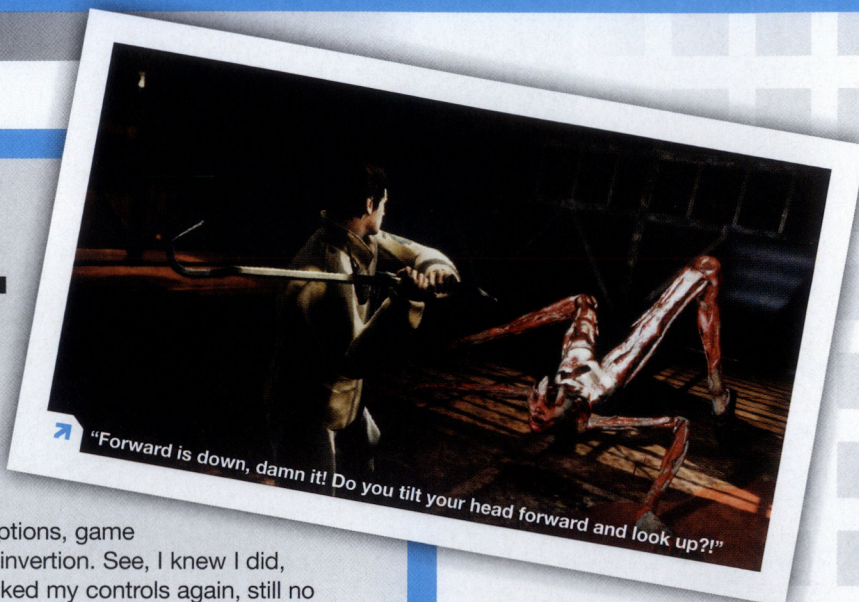
Pause, options, game settings, inversion. See, I knew I did, so I checked my controls again, still no inverted goodness. Maybe Konami's playing a trick, a horrible tasteless trick and made it an on is off and off is on sort of deal. I tested the theory, but to no avail.

So after about 15 minutes of cursing and thinking, maybe this time it will work, I gave up and decided to soldier on, if you will. After a couple of minutes of playing with these alien controls, I realised to myself, if I get into a fight, I'm going to die. Because my brain is wired to the inverted pattern. Sure I can do it if I concentrate really hard, but it's like watching your mum try to play videogames, it's an awkward experience for all involved and does not make for a fun and enjoyable time whatsoever. So I thought, updates! They'll save me! But, alas, I was disappointed again.

I decided to check the forums on the net and found we weren't the only ones, gamers everywhere are experiencing this evil and I also found little bit of info saying that Konami isn't even looking at the possibility of patching this bug. I was shocked, to say the very, very least. And my question is this, what are we going to do about it? It's not fair that half the gaming community gets screwed over, it makes it very hard to enjoy a game, when the controls are not user friendly.

Mike Burns, via email

See readers? Uninverted people are people too! If you prick us, do we not bleed? If you turn us upside-down, are we not blessed with the ability to immediately come to grips with this altered reality?

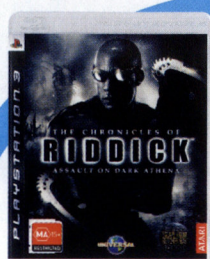


ROCK OFF

Good day, OPS. Any word on when Rock Band 2 could be hitting Australian shelves? No? That's a shame; it seems that not even EA know how to handle this one. It was disappointing enough having to wait an entire year for the first title, I, and I'm sure many others, wish they'd hurry up and just release Rock Band 2 already. One of my friends decided to import it, but I firmly said I'd wait. Three months later, still with no announcement, I can't help but feel a little annoyed. Sure, I could import, but I get a nice feeling from buying something off the shelf at a game store - to me it's a part of the gaming experience (am I insane, OPS?). With The Beatles game confirmed for September 9 worldwide, and with the fact it's being produced by the RB team, I'm crossing my fingers that we'll see something by then. So I ask, am I the only one that thinks such huge delays are pathetic?

Ivan Paust, WA

You're not the only one. We still can't believe Rock Band 2 hasn't been released out here. Just the disc, at the very least. The Rock Band platform is just so much better than Guitar Hero it's not funny. It's the best wide-reviewed music game in history. Your guess is as good as ours. Nobody's talking.



LETTER OF THE MONTH WINS... THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA



➔ This is how feuds get started...

GET LOST

Hi OPS, tell me if you agree. I know Rockstar is a business, and making money is the aim of any business, but the exclusive deal that Microsoft stitched up with it to secure *GTAIV: The Lost and Damned*, and the next downloadable episode too, is bogus. *Grand Theft Auto* started on the PlayStation over 10 years ago, and PlayStation owners have supported it from the get-go. Now, the love isn't being returned. We buy *GTAIV*, just like we bought *GTA: Vice City Stories*, *GTA: Liberty City Stories*, *GTA: San Andreas*, *GTA: Vice City*, *GTAIII*, *GTA2* and *GTA* before it, but we're not offered the chance to play the episodic content for *GTAIV*? That's just

f—king rude Rockstar.

I would absolutely understand why long-term Xbox aficionados would be livid if the shoe was on the other foot, and the DLC was exclusive to the PS3 version. Why are we being shut out?

Was the \$50 million worth it? Surely you could've made that by releasing it on PS3 too? It's all so disappointing.

Charlie T, via email

We couldn't agree more Chuck. PlayStation owners have done more for the GTA series than anyone else – and GTA: San Andreas remains the best-selling PS2 game ever. We could be forgiven for feeling a tad betrayed here, wethinks.

SPEAK TO US

Love the mag? Hate the mag? We want your opinions and questions on OPS, on games – on anything that you feel the need to share with your fellow readers. The best letter of each issue wins the Game of the Month! Write to us on paper or on a computer at:

OPS Feedback
Derwent Howard
PO Box 1037
Bondi Junction, NSW 1355
ops@derwenthoward.com.au

CUTTINGS

FRIENDS FOREVER

My friend would like to know if *Kingdom Hearts 3* is coming out on the PS2.

Nathaniel Morris, Vic

Tell your friend we'd be pretty surprised if it did.

FAMILY FUN

Now usually, when a game I own is MA, I don't crank it out and play in front of the parentals and grandparentals, but this time I thought perhaps Pa has suppressed some frustration and wants to vent it on 'the man' and blow the head off some cops. A wishful hypothetical, but what's life without risks?

Mr. Laktose, via email

*What indeed? This letter actually goes on to mention Pa's laughter at burning screaming prostitutes with a flamethrower in *GTA: SA*.*

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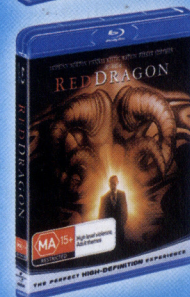
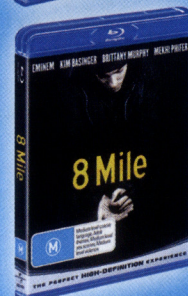
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Speak to us!

FILM TREATMENT

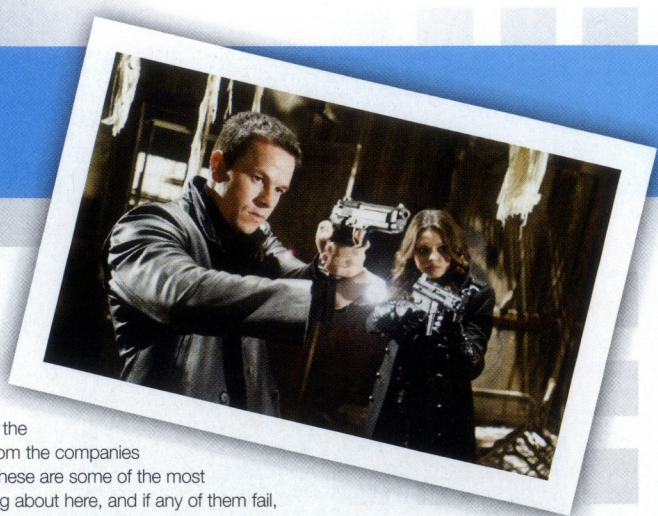
Dear OPS, I am a long time PlayStation fan who has played many wonderful games over the years that I now get nostalgia from. I also get excited when some of my favourite video game franchises are being taken to the big screen and made into blockbuster films.

But it really pisses me off when favourites are ruined; I mean seriously let's look at some of the video games that were adapted into films in 2008, for one I will start with *Max Payne*, what a massive waste of time and money, I felt like the film studio pretty much raped the *Max Payne* franchise possibly ruining Rockstar's hope of continuing the series. Is there some curse that makes all video game movies bad? I mean will there ever be a video game movie that will be remembered as a classic film? I mean the *Tomb Raider* and *Resident Evil* movies were good but they weren't great. Seeing as this year and next year there will be a few video game movies out, examples that I have heard of so far are *Street Fighter*, *Tekken*, *Far Cry*, *Legend of Spyro*, *Prince of Persia*,

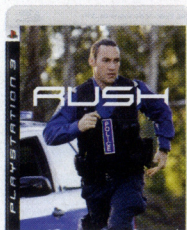
The King of Fighters, *BioShock*, *Uncharted*, *God of War*, *Gears of War* and even *Metal Gear Solid* (I was hoping that you may be able to do a segment of a list of all films being adapted from games in the future), I am expecting major things from the companies that are making these films because these are some of the most famous games in history we are talking about here, and if any of them fail, it could mean the end for the video game to film business which would be devastating for gamers, as they wouldn't be able to enjoy the time to see there favourite games as movies on the big screen.

Jonathan Spiroff, WA

Yep, *Max Payne* was a bit shit. Can you believe it took him 45 minutes to shoot someone? Good news though - *Max Payne 3* has just been announced. Rockstar Vancouver is crafting it as we speak.



IT SHOULD BE A GAME!



RUSH

By Alex Flower

The gameplay of *Rush* would be of similarities to *Tom Clancy's Rainbow Six Vegas 2*, only because it already has some great features that would be already trained skills for a TR officer from rappelling down walls, think logically and strategically to avoid casualties on teammates and others, even to being the perfect squad leader for the job. Speaking of such, you'll play as team leader and primary negotiator Senior Sergeant Lawson Blake. Going beyond *RSV2*, you have more access and interactivity with what the objective is and how you plan to succeed. Before each mission you will, obviously, be briefed on what the objective is from Leon and you'll have to familiarise with the blueprints with the access to a 3D map, BUT AS you are travelling to the scene. Also, you only have time to do so until arrival, to be realistic. Overall, thus creating the best police/tactical response game ever. Of course, Ubisoft produces it (special guest Sam Fisher, don't know why but he must appear on the game for any reason whatsoever).

The legendary feature, 'It Should Be a Game', is back by popular demand! Naturally, since we just brought it back an' all, we haven't received that many entries as of yet. That's where you come in. Send us all your game ideas, funny, serious, insane or otherwise to ops@derwenthoward.com.au. If you happen to have any 'mad Photoshop skillz' then flex those muscles and send us some pics to go with it. It'll make your entry all the more sweet. Get cracking people!

THE PlayStation CROSSWORD!

Official Magazine - Australia

TEST YOUR BRAIN TO WIN A GAME!

How to enter: Use the letters from the coloured squares and re-arrange them to form the name of a videogame character. Send your answers to OPS@derwenthoward.com.au with OPS Crossword as the subject. Entries close June 24.

ACROSS

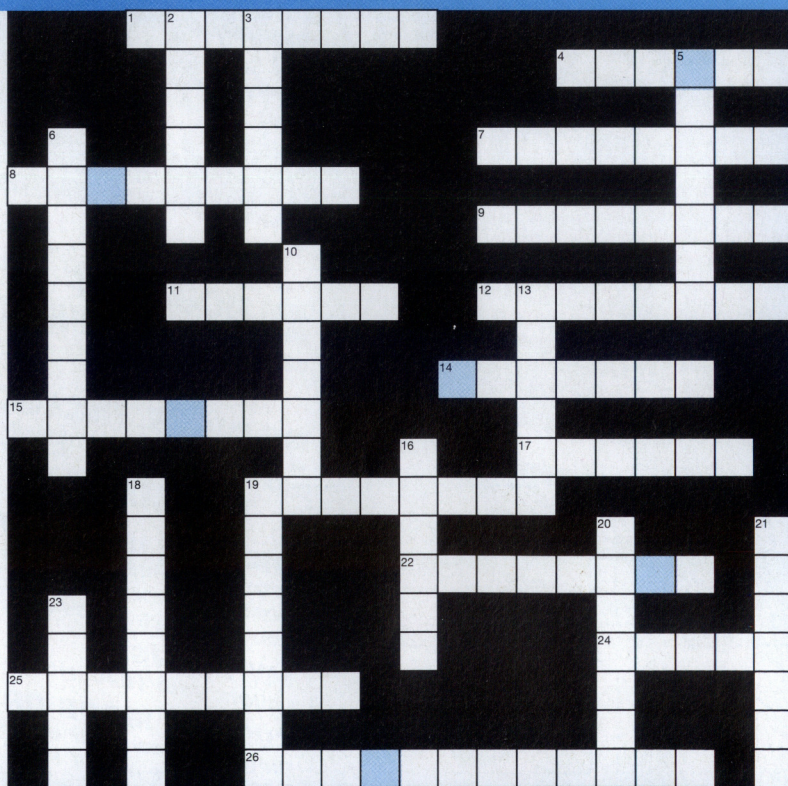
1. Mark Wahlberg played this character in a videogame movie (3,5)
4. _____ Kibbutz is genetically superior (6)
7. Original developers of *Guitar Hero* (8)
8. The Statue of _____ welcomes you to Liberty City (9)
9. What's the name of USG ship that Isaac Clarke boards? (8)
11. *Burnout 2: Point of _____* (6)
12. Sega's latest PS3 RPG, _____ *Chronicles* (8)
14. This Tom appeared in *Guitar Hero III* (7)
15. Namco love to race in their OVAL SOUL (8)
17. Nickname of the dude who

wants to destroy all humans (6)

19. *Fallout 3* developer (8)
22. Schoolgirl brawler, Sakura _____ (8)
24. Blinky, Pinky, Inky and _____ (5)
25. Voice of Eddie Riggs (4,5)
26. This supernatural detective is BRACED AND WRY (6,6)

DOWN

2. Jerusalem's white-robed parkour expert (6)
3. Sonic's sidekick, Miles _____ (6)
5. To win you'll have to command and _____ (7)
6. IT'S WAR SON where Volition is (5,3)
10. A shocking failed utopia under the sea (7)
13. *Resident Evil 5* and *Far Cry 2* are both set in _____ (6)
16. The Iron Fist Tournament (6)
18. Ryu's signature move (8)
19. Recently closed studio, Pandemic, was located in which Aussie city?
20. This city was destroyed in *Resident Evil 3* (7)
21. Sony's anti-grav racing series (7)
23. The D in MDK (5)



Across 1. SLUMPUSSY 6. DEATH 8. URBAN 9. KRI 10. COCO 11. ALMA 12. NARC 14. JENNY 16. HIDEO 18. VALKYR 21. BOUNTYHUNTER 24. ELDORADO 25. STUNTMASER 26. GRIN Down 2. NOTHING

Last month's answers

THE OPS QUIZ THING

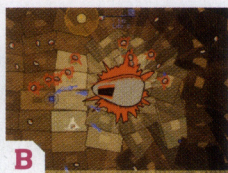
Our imaginatively titled quiz will sort out the wheat from the chaff. Prove your worth with these brainbusters!

1. JOHN TOBIAS CO-CREATED WHICH FIGHTING SERIES?
2. CHOP CHOP MASTER ONION, SUNNY FUNNY AND PJ BERRI WERE CHARACTERS IN WHICH GAME?
3. **TRUE OR FALSE:** GARNET AND ZIDANE FROM FINAL FANTASY IX APPEARED IN A JAPANESE COCA-COLA COMMERCIAL?

4. WHAT STAR WARS GAMES ARE THESE?

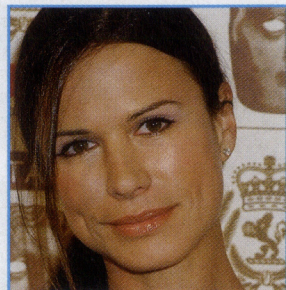


5. IDENTIFY THE GAMES FROM THE SCREENSHOTS:

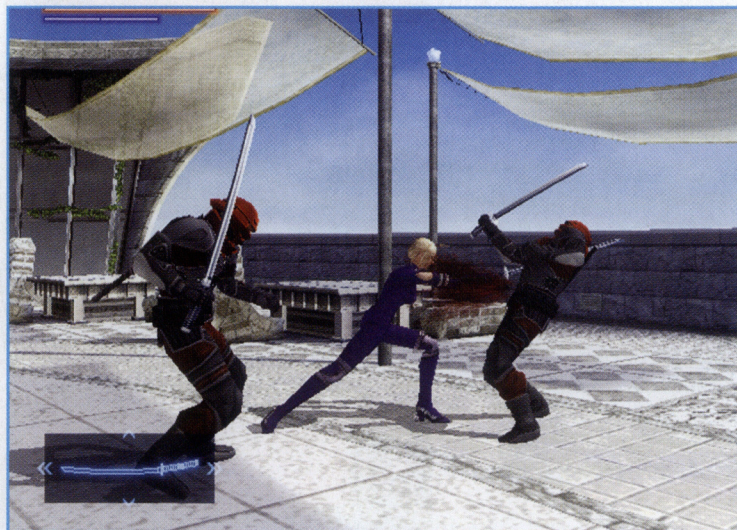


6. REARRANGE THE LETTERS OF 'MY IVY CRADLE' TO FIND THE TITLE OF A POPULAR CAPCOM SERIES.

7. WHAT DO THESE PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON: NELL MCANDREW, RHONA MITRA AND ALISON CARROLL



8. DEATH BY DEGREES (BELOW) WAS A SPIN-OFF OF WHICH GAME?



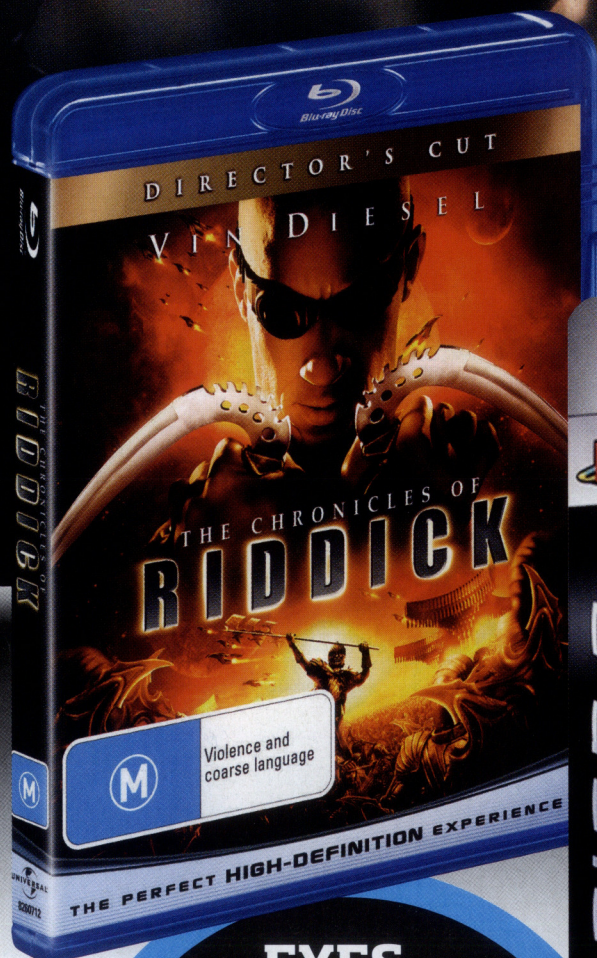
9. **TRUE OR FALSE:** THE SAME COMPANY THAT MADE THE ORIGINAL GRAND THEFT AUTO ALSO MADE LEMMINGS?

10. RYU HAYABUSA STARS IN WHICH TWO FRANCHISES?

1. Mortal Kombat 2. PaRappa the Rapper 3. True. Check it out at <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hrdz66s6fZA> 4. Soulcalibur IV 5. Star Wars: Masters of the Force 6. Devil May Cry 7. True. They've all been real-life representatives of Lara Croft 8. Tekken 9. True 10. Ninja Gaiden and Dead or Alive

COMPETITIONS

WIN! WIN! WIN!

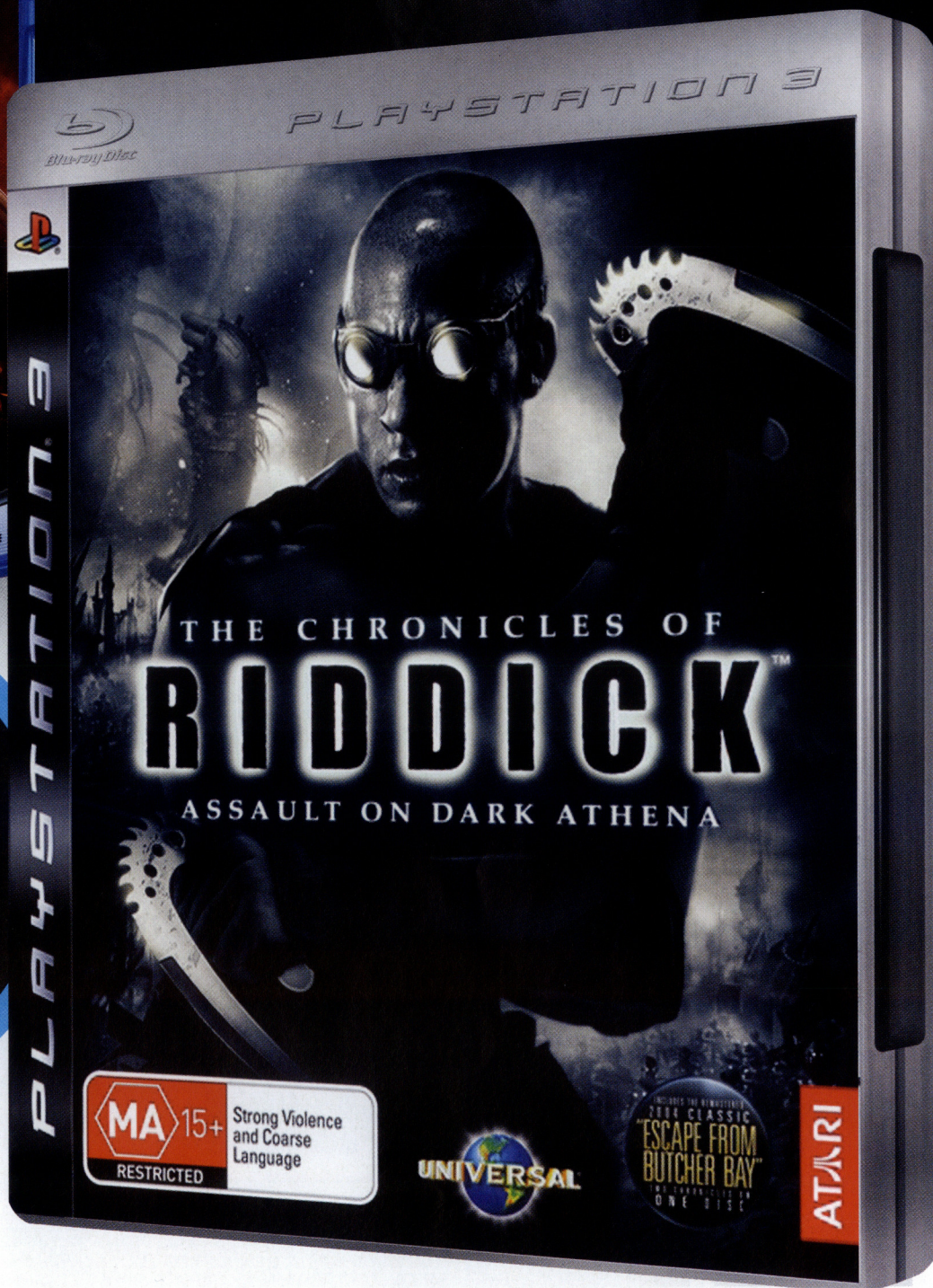


EYES AND SHINE!

Thanks to Atari we've got eight great prize packs featuring the excellent *The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena*, reviewed on page 60, plus *The Chronicles of Riddick* on Blu-ray.

To enter, head to www.gameplayer.com.au/competitions and tell us, in 25 words or less, what's the first thing you'd do if you could see in the dark?

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COMPETITIONS

WIN! WIN! WIN!



WATCH THE WORLD DIE

Thanks to 20th Century Fox we've got five great *The Day the Earth Stood Still* prize packs to give away. Each included *TDTESS* on Blu-ray, plus four other Fox DVDs, a hoodie, a T-shirt, a solar-powered torch and a USB lamp.

To enter, head to www.gameplayer.com.au/competitions and tell us what you'd do if the Earth stood still.

GAMEPLAYER CODE WORD:
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HOW TO ENTER

To enter *Official PlayStation Magazine* competitions log on to www.gameplayer.com.au/competitions or send your entries with the name of the competition CLEARLY marked to OPS competitions PO BOX 1037, Bondi Junction 1355. Please include your name, age and address with your answer on the back of an envelope. Chance plays no part in determining winners. Competitions open 15/04/2009 and close 20/05/2009. Winners will be notified by mail and names displayed at www.gameplayer.com.au.

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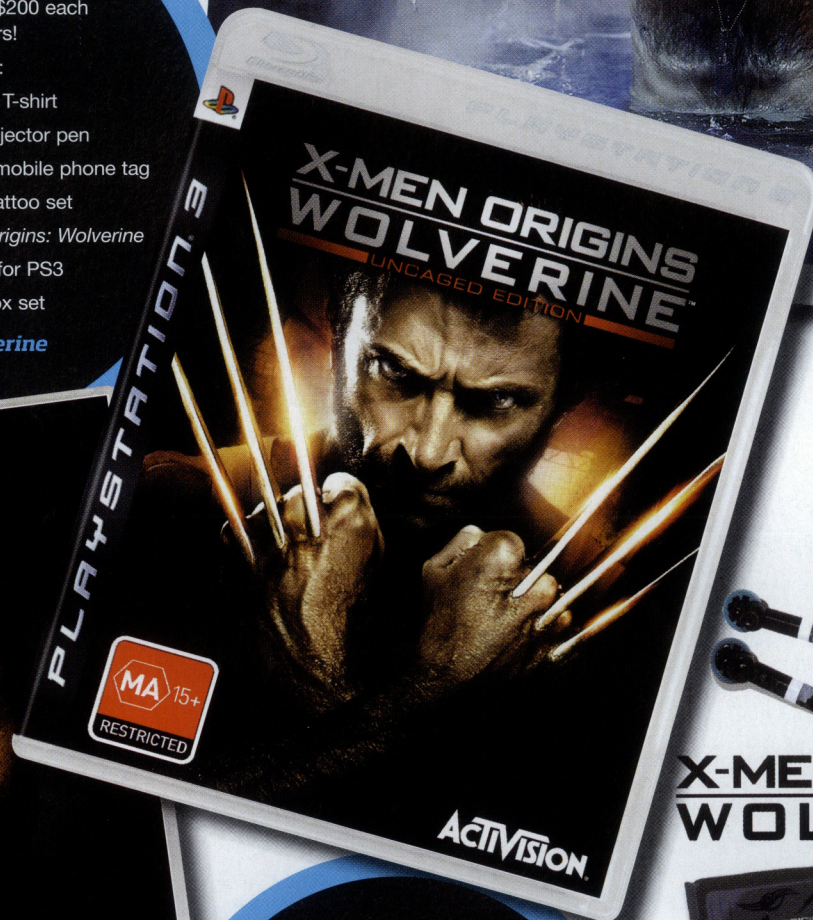
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X-Men Origins: Wolverine for PS3

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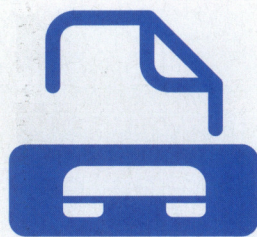


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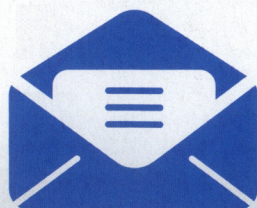


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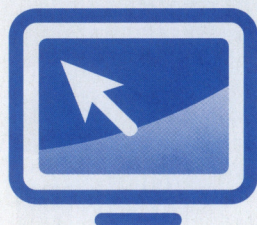
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Words: James Cottee

SELLING THE PROTO

Radical Entertainment president Kelly Zmak talks to us about how to launch a new IP, why Activision is beating EA, and the future of the games industry

Mr. Zmak would rather not say how much it's cost to make *Prototype*, but he was willing to give us a ballpark estimate: "Expensive."

We had a chance to chat with the president of Radical Entertainment during a recent Activision conference in New York. The TV news was filled with panic and despair, yet Zmak was overflowing with confidence: for the future of the industry, of his company, and of his brand new IP, *Prototype*.

It began development as a licensed property, another action epic along the lines of Radical's *Incredible Hulk* games. When that game "fell out of the company portfolio", Radical – and Zmak – had a choice to make. One option was to just give up. Instead, they thought 'What would Chuck Norris do?' and chose an entirely more daring option.

"We call it the opportunity of change," says Zmak. "You have to be ready to pounce when the opportunity reveals itself. The project fell out, they didn't have another for us to work on. What happens? You either cut that cost, or you go to management and you say, 'Guess what?! WE have an idea.' And then you have to convince THEM that that's worth the money. You have to demonstrate it through your technology. You have to demonstrate it through your talent. You have to demonstrate it through your writing."

It's not easy going up to men in suits and asking them for millions and millions of dollars. "It's scary! And it's difficult. And people are tough to work with. But

that's what makes it such a blast!"

We – critics and consumers alike – often lament that there are too many sequels, and too few new intellectual properties coming out each year. Zmak, however, sees that as a good thing. "I personally believe that an IP should be a rigorous and difficult thing to launch. Great ideas are actually not that uncommon. Great implementation of a great idea is the hard part. When we went through the early stages, it was both a business proposal and an emotional proposal. When I say it was emotional, management invested in these people. They invested in us, in what they believed we were capable to do with it. In that, we felt that we had a unique intellectual property. We had a unique character. We had the right team, at the right time, to actually pull it off."

"But it was a grueling process. You have to demonstrate your abilities every milestone. You have to demonstrate progress as you go through this. Because the beauty of our business is that I get to do what I love to do, and my people get to do what they love to do, and the reason is somebody else gives us the money to do that."

"The trade-off is, they want the money back. With interest!"

There's no escaping one fact: the games industry is a business, foremost and first. "Everybody likes to talk about the 'art' of our industry. Everybody likes to talk about those aspects. The truth is, it's not a hobby. It's a business, and we have to give a return on an investment," he explains. "That's the challenge."

Because if you actually look at the business model, up front, for an original IP, it's scary. So therein lies the challenge. You've got to come with the confidence, to be willing to put your butt on the line. You've got to show up and say: 'Guys, this is a great game. And here's why...'"

It takes strong and forthright people to get a game green lit. "Until you can put their hands on it," continues Zmak, "Until they can play it, how do you know? And in development, when can you put your hands on it? VERY far along in the expense pool. So it REALLY comes down to that credibility, it comes down to the ability and the integrity of the team, it comes down to talent." To sell a game that doesn't physically exist outside of your team's imagination to management, you need balls of steel. You need to channel Chuck Norris. Ideally, you should BE Chuck Norris.

As for the development process itself, perfection is not required. You shouldn't be afraid of making mistakes – it's the only way to weed out bad ideas. "Those things don't belong in the product, but they lead to the things that should be in the game."

It's important, however to distinguish between necessary and silly mistakes. "We call it the 'Oh S!' and the 'Oh F!' I'll let you fill in the blanks as to what those words mean. The 'Oh S!' is: new mistake. Pick yourself up, dust yourself off, go forward, remember what happened, and keep doing it, because you're going to learn from that. The 'Oh F!' – 'You knew better! What the heck are ya' thinkin'!! You did it AGAIN?! Stop doin' that!'"

"It's okay to make mistakes. It just can't be a silly mistake. Because silly mistakes actually cost teams. They cost projects. They lead to cancellations."

Given the high-profile losses and corporate implosions that seem routine in the games industry, Zmak was able to offer some insight into where his competitors have gone wrong. It can be a risky thing, for instance, to headhunt a former soft drink czar and parachute him in as the head of a video game company. It didn't work out so well for Midway.

"I think it has to be done in context. First of all, the concept of anyone coming in to 'save' something is a fairly ego-driven concept. I think it's very difficult to parachute anyone in. I think it's difficult on the manager as much as it is on the staff. The learning curve in our industry is not appreciated. I think that's a real challenge for most execs."

"If you want to sell a game that doesn't exist outside of your team's imagination to management, you need balls of steel. Ideally you should BE Chuck Norris"

TYPE



➤ "He was in the wrong 'hood" [dons sunnies]



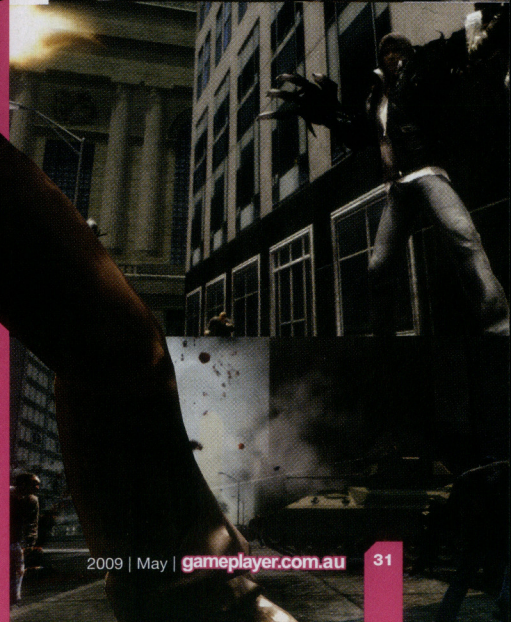
➤ The world's most-filmed city



➤ "Say hello to Mr. Glove"



➤ Catching taxis the easy way is for pussies



➤ "Yo B-boy!" [chomp]

"Activision has been remarkably successful in bringing people in from outside the games industry — to bring that knowledge and expertise. And I think we've benefited from it."

Some firms have floundered, and even EA has now been eclipsed. Just what is Activision doing differently to succeed? "When you look at the competition, and you look at events

“Activision has been remarkably successful in bringing people in from outside the games industry”

and at circumstances, I personally think the problem has been that the others just don't change. 'This is the path! Follow the path! Stay on the strategy!' And an event needs to happen to shift the strategy. First is: being in front, and saying 'the strategy's not working, we need to shift.'

"The truth is, everything we do is based off quality. It's based off what we deliver to the consumer, and the gamer out there gets to choose whether or not we're right or wrong through their dollars."

Looking ahead to the next generation of games machines — the PS4 and beyond — Zmak cited quality as the next frontier to conquer, now that high-def, photo-realistic graphics are the norm.

"I think for this generation of consoles, you've reached the boundaries. Not the boundaries of

creativity, we haven't even touched that — the boundaries of the technology. And so now the question is, 'how do we actually make better games?', versus, 'how do I get the technology to do what I want it to do?' How do I make better games — and what do those games mean?"

In practical terms, that means hiring more and better writers. "I do think [development] teams will grow a little

larger, because I think that the scope of our games will remain big. User expectation, consumer expectation, is

BIG. There's a place for small. It works very well. It's a great business model. But it can't garner a US\$59.99 price point."

Does anything threaten the inexorable rise of the games industry? Pirates, perhaps — but there are no easy way to deal with those who would steal the games they want to play. "I don't know how we stop them. What I do know is that we don't use the same method that other groups have been using." Zmak was too polite to be more specific, but was probably referring to EA's extremely unpopular use of online-activated copy protection in its PC releases.

Zmak also had some insight on how to forge ahead in the games industry, based on his own career progression: "QA, QA Supervisor, QA Manager, Assistant Producer, Associate

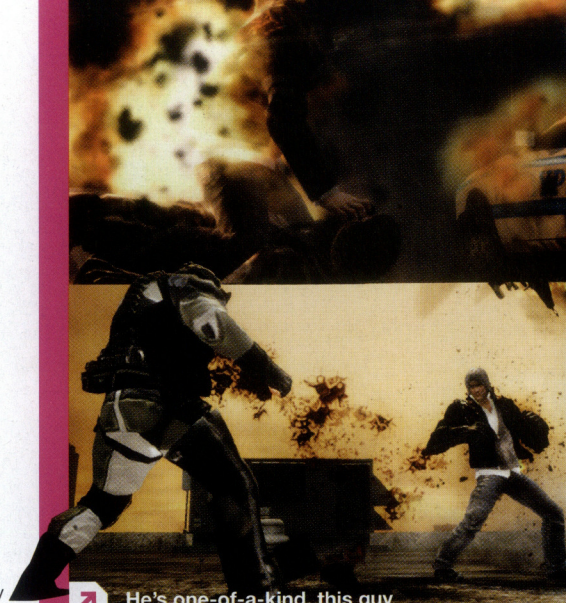
Producer, Producer, Executive Producer, Vice-President of Product Development, Chief Operating Officer & Senior VP, and finally a President." Note that there aren't any art or programming jobs on that list — the only real prerequisite is determination.

"When I dropped out of college in 1986, my dad said I was nuts! 'There's no business here, you're playing games for a living. You're throwing your life away!' To be honest, I didn't know that it was going to turn into a career. But I did know that I had a passion for it, and the leadership around me throughout my career seemed to believe I had a talent for it. So I had this passion, and I had this talent, and you can make a good living at it."

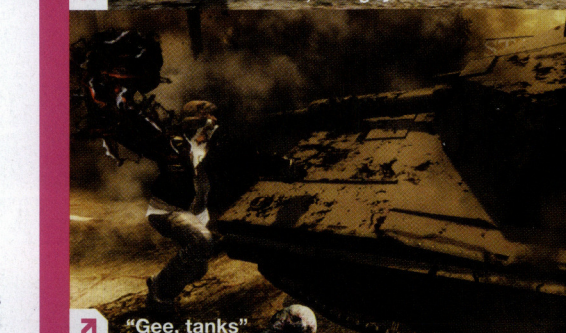
"That's Jim Collins's 'Head Job' concept out of Good to Great, which is: if you can find that sweet spot in the middle of your talent, and your passion, and your career, THAT'S where you can just thrive. I've been very fortunate."

So what's next for Activision? With the entire back-catalogues of Sierra and Infocom at their disposal, Zmak believes the time may be right to take some RPG classics like *King's Quest*, and bring them up to date for today's consoles. After all, it worked for *Fallout*.

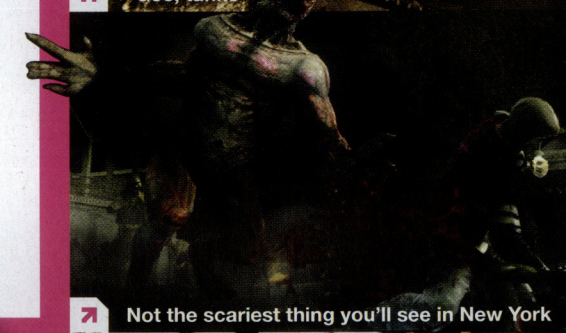
But will we ever see a *World of Zork*? "It's always a possibility!"



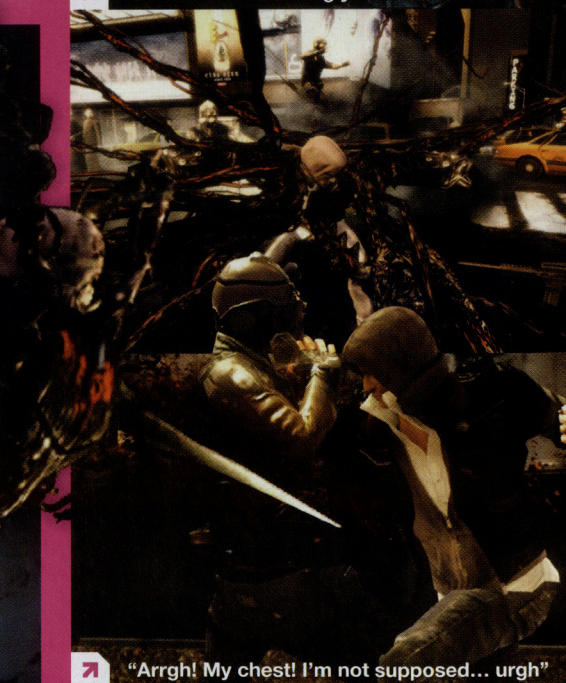
➤ He's one-of-a-kind, this guy



➤ "Gee, tanks"



➤ Not the scariest thing you'll see in New York



➤ "Arrgh! My chest! I'm not supposed... urch"

➤ The hottest pet this summer



SURRENDER



TO THE EXPERIENCE OF
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INCOMING

Red Faction: Guerrilla

7 "Argh! My back! I'm not supposed to get debris in it"

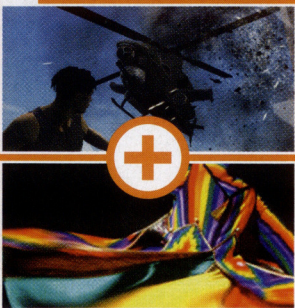
PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: MID 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: THQ | DEVELOPER: VOLITION

RED FACTION: GUERRILLA

Better red than dead

IT'S LIKE...

7 Saints Row 2



7 A radical trench coat

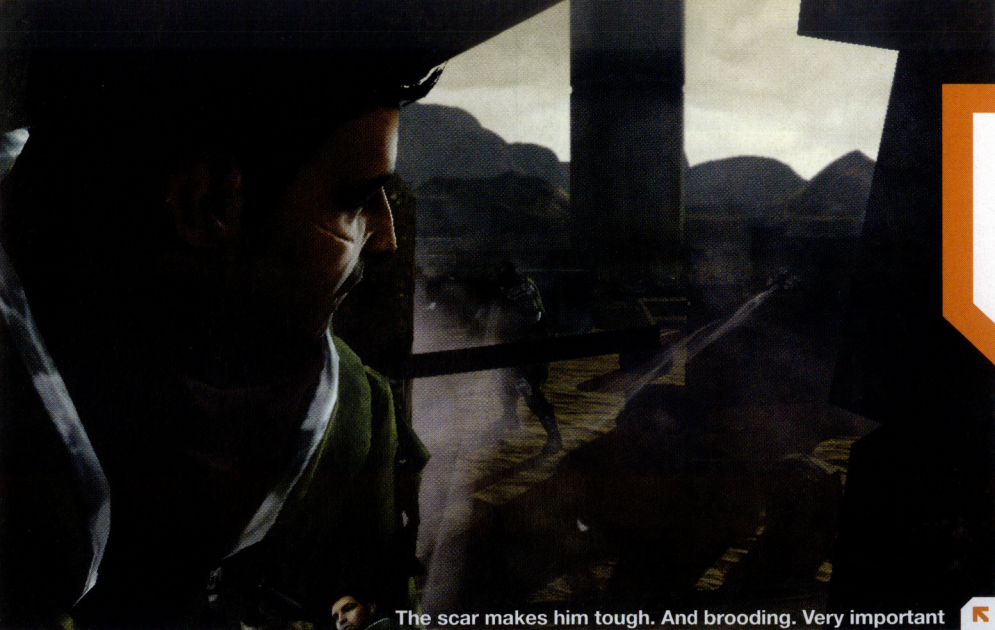
So, we know that this third title in the *Red Faction* series breaks away from its PS2 shooter roots, though the one-man impetus remains, and has gone all trendy – turning into an open-world third-person action game. Volition made a good fist of the genre last year with *Saints Row 2* and whilst it was a bit glitchy you couldn't say it didn't pack a lot of mischief and mayhem in the city limits. Going in radically different directions in both content and form from *Saint's Row*, with a sparse-looking mountainous Mars and more focus on quality than quantity, looks like it'll pay off for Volition and THQ to avoid flooding gamers' shelves with samey titles.

We have slight reservations after more hands-on time; we often wondered if the havoc our protagonist, Mason, was causing would have repercussions outside of the mission we'd completed – surely

a one-man wrecking-crew will be on the cops most-wanted list just after he's destroyed a massive silo and crucial gas lines – while enemies occasionally did dumb things like running into the side of a mountain and jogging on the spot. We've also had moments of *déjà vu* back to *Saints Row 2* and even *GTA IV* but this hasn't stopped us from giggling at the mayhem, because despite our misgivings *Guerrilla* is a blast.

We've completed several missions from the start and also from the middle of the game in the couple of builds we've played. *Guerrilla*'s story is standard defeat-the-fascists and revenge-your-dead-brother stuff but the promise of ripping into the action with heavy machinery will propel players on their EDF-smashing rampage, backed by superb graphics and a truly robust physics engine. The

weaker-than-Earth gravity on Mars means Mason jumps nearly two metres in the air from a standing start and swinging his sledgehammer is a snack without feeling pathetically light. Everything he lays into is destroyed spectacularly; structures come apart piece by piece, layer by layer. Striking a section of a building will take out a line in the panels rather than the whole thing from floor to ceiling, so while levelling a garage with your sledge is a lot of work it's thoroughly satisfying seeing it all come crashing down. Stabbing the sprint button we took a few running jumps and viciously shredded the wall of a garage at head-height, causing the concrete to fall away and the reinforced rods to lazily gape out. We accidentally clipped a couple of gas bottles on the other side of a wall with the sledge, sending Mason's corpse tumbling backward and us to the latest checkpoint.

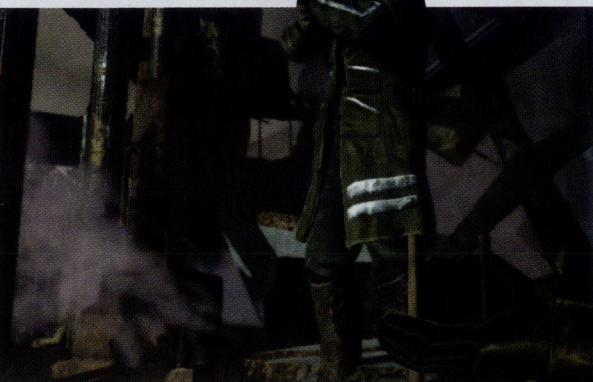
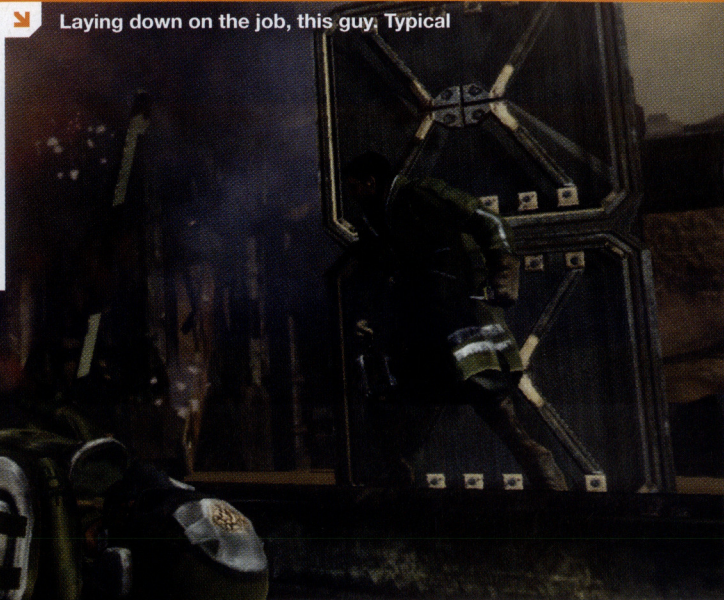


The scar makes him tough. And brooding. Very important

REMOTE CONTROL

Mason has some deep pockets in his trench coat with plenty of room to stash remote charges. These mini explosives will stick to anything – including enemies – and placing them strategically can quickly and easily flatten tough structures. We've managed to 'surf' a couple of towers with five or six charges stuck at the bottom then detonating them from the top of the monolith.

Laying down on the job, this guy. Typical



"Argh! Bees! SPACE bees! Get'em off! Get 'em off!"

Our mantra after that was anything that looks explosive probably is.

Turning the hammer towards targets made of flesh and bone flings the once punishing enemies sideways like a marionette with its strings cut, though hanging around a gun-toting grunt for too long is bad news for your health as we discovered in a fire-fight. Tired of absorbing bullets we ducked behind cover and snapped to the wall to catch our breath and slowly let Mason's health climb out of the red. Poking our head round the corner we took the grunt down in a volley of pistol shots and lobbed a few remote explosives towards his chums. As they scattered we detonated the charge, destroying a part of the wall they had hidden behind

giving us time to spring out and take them down. Nicking their truck we took off down the road and after checking out the map we found a time-attack side mission on an EDF tower. Given two minutes and a handy cache of about 14 or 15 gas canisters we had to reduce a five-storey tower to rubble. Without EDF goons to worry about we stacked the canisters as close as we could to the walls around the outside of the building, running back and forth to the alcove where the canisters lay and plotting where the next one would be set. Canisters in place and with only a few seconds left we legged it to safety, turned, zoomed and fired three pistol bullets into the nearest container and braced ourselves for the



You're fired

shockwave. The chain reaction of one canister igniting the next was catastrophic, a white-blue-hot explosion that kept on expanding. The air rippled in the heat as shards of concrete and steel flung off and upward before raining back down, but the building stubbornly remained. Restarting the challenge we changed our strategy and bundled everything inside the tower. With less than 30 seconds left and several canisters still in tucked in the alcove we lobbed the remaining ones in as best we could, but left one neatly in the doorway to act as the 'fuse'. The result could've been shown on an episode of 'When Buildings Are Obliterated With a Tonne of Explosive' as the tower concertinaed in on itself. Tower down within the time limit we were pretty proud of ourselves, and pleased to see we could come back and try it again to beat our time. Smartly, the whole thing

happened without the frame-rate dropping in both the firefight and detonation, and watching chunks of the building strip away convincingly during the explosions was never the same twice. The, "Hey, have you tried doing..." conversations have already started – which is a good sign for all. Mars, here we come. **Paul Taylor**

WE SAY

- Excellent physics
- Fast paced
- Very familiar

OPS IS...
Going hammer and tong





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INCOMING

Wanted: Weapons of Fate



FLYING STRAIGHT

A bullet is not a cricket ball and, as such, the notion you could get one to curve is quite ridiculous. Swinging a cricket ball is a different thing altogether. Bullets, on the other hand, don't have seams, they don't have a shined side and they are designed to fly straight by their very nature (a bullet that doesn't would be astonishingly useless). Thus, they'd be impossible to curve, at the very least using the human arm and a conventional round.

Bourne-style takedowns feature...



IT'S LIKE...

Wanted



Stranglehold



...to break up the cinematic gun battles



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: MID 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: WB | DEVELOPER: GRIN

WANTED: WEAPONS OF FATE

He's seen a million faces, and he's shot them all

The lowest difficulty setting in *Wanted: Weapons of Fate* isn't easy. We don't mean to say that it's actually surprisingly tough, we mean it just isn't called 'Easy'.

It's called 'Pussy'.

Naturally, we just couldn't bring ourselves to select it. Easy mode has a number of benefits in our line of work, at least for a genuine first hands-on. It allows you to come to grips with the controls, experiment with outcomes and explore the world a little more thoroughly without having your face stoved in by some heavily-armed scumbag every five seconds.

But we couldn't choose 'Pussy'. We couldn't accept that label. Somewhere, deep inside, something stirred and prevented it. The same inner caveman that generates the pride inside every man who's just fixed a mechanical object using only a butter knife and some duct tape, or dispatches the pangs of manly grief when a man has just heard an anecdote about a faithful dog who laid down its life to save its master, flat out refused to be a party to it. Modern man is soft enough already, and it's about time games started to reinforce that.

It's not the first time we've had a game threaten to berate us if we chose the easiest

difficulty level (*Wolfenstein 3D* is another that immediately springs to mind) but it is all too rare. In a world where men are being encouraged to wear tights, knitted berets and cardigans tied around their shoulders, it's refreshing to boot up a game that immediately shouts harden the frack up. It's a testosterone-coated speedhump on the highway to an increasingly feminised planet.

All that aside, is *Wanted* worthy of this important role? Is it good enough? Does it have the sack?

Well, it seems okay.

Wanted is a licensed game, but it isn't being made to coincide with a film release. The poor quality we tend to associate with movie games generally comes as a result of tight deadlines. This hasn't been a factor for *Wanted*. GRIN, a development studio near as busy as Gearbox right now, can make a decent game too. We've played *Bionic Commando*, and it's good.

The preview build of *Wanted* features a number of levels, plus a handful of tutorials, that gave us a taste for what *Wanted* has to offer. It's a bit like *Uncharted*-lite, with a little *Stranglehold* thrown in for good measure.

There are some neat special moves

tacked on which capture some of main character Wesley Gibson's abilities from the film, some of which work better than others. Wesley has a slow-motion SWAT turn – spinning laterally from cover to cover – that he can loose a few well-placed rounds during. This is good. Curving bullets, one of the films key gimmicks, is also tackled – but it's a little finicky and doesn't really have the success rate you'd imagine it would. Trading cover is handled very well; it's designed to be seamless. You can also temporarily lunge over waist-high cover and stab anyone on the other side in the head.

We'll have a review very soon, if you want it. **Luke Reilly**

WE SAY

- ↑ Punishes chickens
- ↑ Nice cover mechanic
- ↓ One trick pony?

OPS IS...
Loading mags



PS3 GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: TBA | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

FUEL

High-octane thrills or a real dipstick?

▶ "This could be the checkpoint, I'm not sure"



▶ Unnecessary. We hope you die

Codemasters has the Midas touch with racing games. *Colin McRae: DiRT* and the multiple incarnations before it, *Race Driver: GRID* and the string of even better *V8 Supercar* games were, generally speaking, solid titles that have galvanized the Codies in racers' minds. However, is Codemasters over-stretching itself with yet another racing franchise? *DiRT 2* comes out later this year, so we're

curious to see how *Fuel* will perform in the Codemaster portfolio.

While *Fuel* keeps the real world setting, its roster of vehicles diversifies significantly from *CMR* and *DiRT* with original creations, mostly due to its story. In *Fuel*'s universe, global warming has ravaged North America. Cities are deserted and the land scorched, creating inhospitable terrain that's forced the population out



▶ Blower valves. All show

IT'S LIKE...

▶ MotorStorm



▶ Big-ness



and leaving it free for racers to come in and claim as their own to host elaborate races. Perpetuating the global-warming cycle, then, as we're pretty sure these vehicles would chew through petroleum like an army major sucks down a stogie. Videos on the net show cars, trucks, bikes, buggies and ATVs modded pretty roughly – hey, it worked for *Mad Max* – so don't go expecting the duco to be shiny.

We began our hands-on time in the Offshore Shack, one of many posts around the world that act as a hub for races. From here we could choose a variety of races or challenges specific to certain vehicles. As you'd expect each vehicle has its strengths and weaknesses, so if you're happy to stick to the well-worn path then a burly low-slung four-wheeler will be perfect, but going off-road needs something more nimble with lots of torque to tear up the hills. Exploring the environment is encouraged, as *Fuel*'s hook is the size of the game world: over 14,000 square kilometers. In real world terms that's about the size of Sydney and ALL of its suburbs. Feel free to reset your jaw. An A-to-B race might snake and weave around the map, but if you feel adventurous just take your motor off-road and barrel through the

scrub. Driving yourself from one end of the world to the other will take a while but in doing so you'll see the day slowly turned to night and back again.

Throw in evolving weather that changes from glorious sunshine to bitter winds and snow, and gamers are going to have to adapt. The best bit? Don't expect to see any loading screens as you race around – Atari promise this will be seamless. Comparisons to *MotorStorm* are immediate and inevitable: unsanctioned races set on mostly uncultivated terrain in a collection of rag-tag vehicles, all on courses that aren't neatly cornered or signposted. Look out Monument Valley, a change is coming. **Paul Taylor**

MAP ATTACK

So, still wrapping your head around the sheer size of the *Fuel* world? Here's what you can fit into 14,000 sq km:

- 1 entire country: Montenegro = 13,812 sq km
- 1 city and its surrounds: Sydney = 12,144 sq km
- 1 Paris = 14,518 sq km
- 11 city centers: New York City = 1214 sq km
- 200 billion copies of a magazine: OPS = 696 sq cm



WE SAY

- ⬆ Day-to-night cycle
- ⬆ Minimal load times
- ⬇ Needs more classes

OPS IS...
Dropping the clutch



INCOMING

Terminator Salvation

IT'S LIKE...

G.R.A.W.



Robots



"Hey, lady, look out for that flying circle!"



"Oi, who's pinched my wheels?"



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: MAY 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: WARNER BROS. INTERACTIVE ENTERTAINMENT | DEVELOPER: GRIN

TERMINATOR SALVATION

Christian Bale and us are done, professionally

It's not often that a game gets this close to release and we don't know a lot about it. In the case of movie franchise tie-ins, of which this game is certainly one, it's generally a bad sign.

Terminator Salvation, however, is slightly more than just a movie game by some no-name developer. It's being made by Swedish developer GRIN, who has proven its worth with the PC ports of *G.R.A.W.* and *G.R.A.W. 2*, as well as the recent arcade remake of *Bionic Commando*, and the PS3 title *Wanted: Weapons of Fate*. As something of a burgeoning go-to company for high quality franchise titles/remakes, GRIN certainly seems like a good choice, particularly given that the game will be a squad-based shooter.

Don't expect this to be *Ghost Recon*, though, as *Terminator Salvation* has a few

limitations. Firstly, you won't be ordering your squad mates around. Sure, John Connor is the main character, but the game will be set two years before the events of the film, where he's yet to rise to the dubious honour of leading the resistance against the machines.

With the action strongly focused on your burly shoulders, we don't think it's too much to expect some tight squad AI – the type that will dig in and suppress the enemy, allowing you to seek out flanking opportunities and show those red-eyed bastards what the mean end of a shotgun tastes like.

Of course, being a tie-in game means that there are other limitations when it comes to characters, events and the like, but GRIN has managed to move things around a little bit within the IP, developing

new enemies and also fleshing out the back-stories of some of the lesser-followed characters in the film. We're hoping that the game's story will wrap up in a satisfactory manner; it does, after all, need to lead into the events of the movie.

If *Terminator Salvation* is to be more than a quick cash-in during the movie's release window, GRIN will need to present a title that is extremely polished. Not only will gamers demand polished high-res visuals, as they are accustomed to, but also an immersive plot, good dialogue and engaging tasks that go beyond 'shoot the bad robots'. We know you've heard us say this a million times before, but this one really could go either way. We'll bring you our official review as soon as our copy appears via a time portal from the year 2016.

Dylan Burns

WHO'S WHO IN THE FILM

John Connor (Christian Bale): The guy fated to lead the resistance against the machines. Only problem is, things aren't quite going as planned.



Kyle Reese (Anton Yelchin): Connor's future father in the past (yeah it gets complicated). The young Reese in the film has no idea that his friend is actually his own progeny, but then that's not exactly uncommon even in this time period...



Marcus Wright (Sam Worthington): A mysterious stranger who suddenly appears. His last memory is of being on death row. But is he from the past or from the future?



Kate Connor (Bryce Dallas Howard): John's wife, who was played by Claire Danes in the previous film. In this movie she's seven months pregnant and something of a field doctor to survivors of the conflict.



WE SAY

- Movie links
- Proven developer
- Probably rushed

OPS IS...
Blomesh exoskeleton



PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: 2010 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: EA REDWOOD SHORES

DANTE'S INFERNO

When poets attack

IT'S LIKE...

God of War



Church



Sent to hell for being too horny



LESSER KNOWN GAMING SINS

The Eunuch: We've all played online with some whining 12-year-old kid with a voice so high only dolphins can hear him. If you're a eunuch, stay away from lobbies.

LOL: If you actually say "lol" you are a sinner of epic proportions.

Crunching: Food and games are an awesome mix, but that doesn't mean everyone on your squad wants to actually hear every single crunch while you eat Doritos. Chew with your mouth shut or repent.

Hubris: It's one thing to know more about every game coming out than your mates, it's another to be an arrogant snot. Learn the art of reciprocal conversation.



MEANWHILE, ON OUT OF PROPORTION WORLD...



"Third floor, eternal damnation"

So as not to bore you too much with literature-related waffle, we will say that *Dante's Inferno*, the game, is really only loosely based on the 14th century poem entitled *The Divine Comedy*. Dante, the poet, never actually visited the nine circles of hell, nor did he wield a massive scythe about the place, lopping off demons' limbs with aplomb and partaking in quick time events like there's no tomorrow.

But hey, would a game that played out by throwing thousands and thousands lines of dialogue at the player actually be interesting? No, so EA has done the smart thing and... made a game that looks like *God of War*.

Dante's massive scythe actually belonged to Death, whom you'll defeat in the game's prologue, before embarking upon your day trip to hell in search of (surprise, surprise) Dante's piece of crumpet (his 'perfect woman'), Beatrice. The nine levels in the game represent the mortal sins – limbo, lust, gluttony, greed, wrath, heresy, violence, fraud and treachery. Each

level will force Dante to face his own sins, with the entire game being something of a metaphysical journey through Dante's past.

Dante's Inferno is, first and foremost, an action game. Quick time events will come thick and fast and, via the game's redemption system, will play a large role in how you level up your weapons and magic spells. As you come across various tortured sinners, you will need to choose between destroying them and saving their souls. The latter option will bring up a more demanding QTE, but the rewards will be much higher. Fail and you'll gain nothing, which will greatly affect how many 'souls' you receive as credit for upgrading the main character.

Our main concern is that the game may come across as far too generic. Despite the poem being regarded as one of the main influences on early views of Christian hell and the afterlife, today's audience may not be so impressed when they see familiar concepts pop up. Throwing creatures such as Cerberus, or the end boss Satan, at players may fail to have an impact unless some effort is put into making these

encounters feel fresh.

With the game still a long way from release, and being developed by the team responsible for *Dead Space*, we're fairly hopeful that the game has enough production time to progress and deliver on its violent and macabre setting. If it can distance itself from its obvious *God of War* aesthetics, as well as make QTEs actually work (please, let them not suck), then *Dante's Inferno* may well help maintain EA's recent reputation for pumping out impressive new IP. We'll know early next year. **Dylan Burns**

WE SAY

Death's scythe

Solid inspiration

QTEs

OPS IS...
A bad sinner

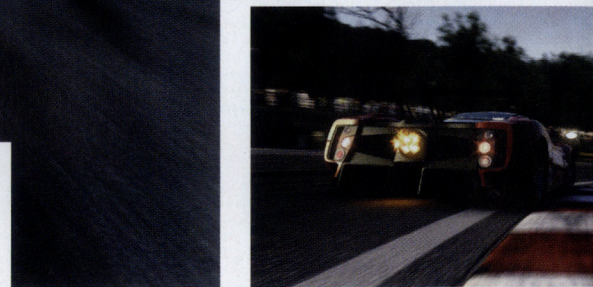


INCOMING

Need For Speed: Shift



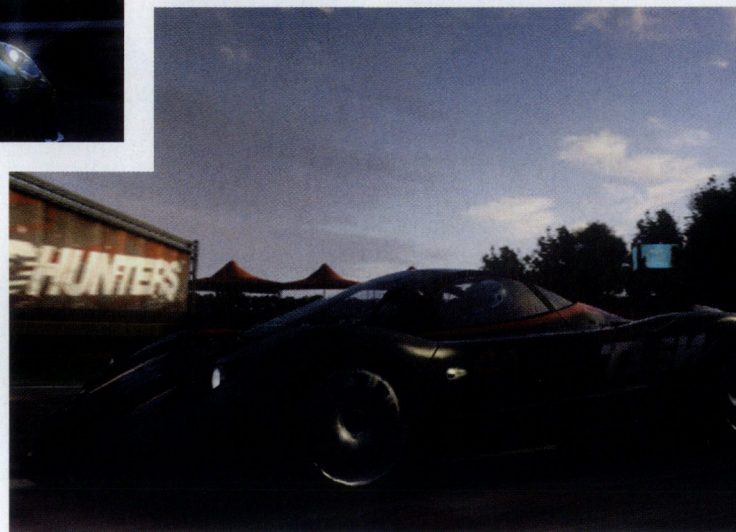
➤ "I'm too old for this shift!"



PS3 GENRE: RACING | RELEASE: LATE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: EA | DEVELOPER: SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS

NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT

Eat Shift and die



IT'S LIKE...

➤ Race Driver: GRID



➤ Reality



ProStreet was a reinvention of sorts for the *Need for Speed* franchise, but it didn't work. The handling was off, and it clashed with the sim-like pro-racing approach. *Undercover* was a return to franchise roots, which looked promising but ultimately didn't work either. It didn't do enough that the likes of *Most Wanted* hadn't already done three years ago.

Rumours that the *Need for Speed* series was kaput after these two underperformers, however, are bunk. *Need for Speed: Shift* will be hitting PS3 later this year – and things have changed. A lot, actually.

Taking a leaf out of *Race Driver GRID*'s book, *Shift* takes a sudden powerslide into sim territory, focussing on real-world circuit and street racing. What will likely come as a surprise to most is that a new development studio has been brought on board to help the series make the shift. Slightly Mad Studios, the developer of the much-lauded *GTR* games on PC (regarded by many as the best racing simulations on any format) is bringing a brand new level of

credibility to *Need for Speed*. The brash, malcontent street punk is growing up, and the name of the game here is realism without sacrificing the fun.

For those of you not happy that *Need for Speed* is going serious, worry not. Word on the wire is there's another *Need for Speed* game in development, beyond *Shift* and new Wii and PC iterations. It's being described as an "action title", which we expect won't be dissimilar to the past few years of story-driven action-racing *NFS* instalments.

More on both of these games as we uncover details. ➤ **Luke Reilly**

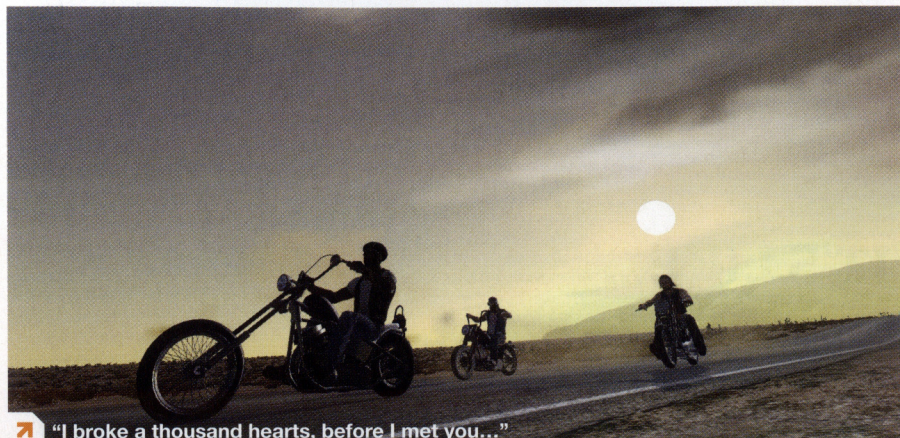
WE SAY

- ⬆ Total overhaul
- ⬆ Proper handling
- ⬇ Any Aussie cars?

OPS IS...
Filling up



➤ This shift just got real



7 "I broke a thousand hearts, before I met you..."

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: TBC | DEVELOPER: DEEP SILVER VIENNA

RIDE TO HELL

GTA meets *Easy Rider*?

We're pretty sore about missing out on *GTA IV: The Lost and Damned*. It's a wild and violent look and contemporary US East Coast biker culture, and unfortunately we don't know if it'll ever hit PS3. What will, however, is *Ride to Hell* – an open-world action game set in the 1960s US West Coast outlaw biker scene.

The initial info is packed with promise. An accurate reflection of the sex, drugs and rock 'n roll 60s. Inspiration from gonzo god Hunter S. Thompson's *Hell's Angels*. A Vietnam vet having trouble reintegrating into society – the sexual revolution has begun, but the horrors of war are still fresh in his mind. A 95 square-kilometre map, based on all the most interesting parts of California. Customisation. Sweet '60s tunes. Free

love. It sounds good on paper.

It only takes a little digging on Deep Silver Vienna to find out that before it was Deep Silver Vienna it was Games That Matter – and that Games That Matter was a 'refounding' of the defunct Rockstar Vienna (Rockstar Vienna handled console ports of titles developed by other subsidiaries of Rockstar Games. It also began development on *Manhunt 2*).

As such, we don't really know what to think about *Ride to Hell*. We certainly like the sound of it – it's fairly unique in the scheme of things, and we like period games; *Mafia*, *GTA: Vice City*, *Driver* (there's just something about visiting a different era). Will it be as good as we'd like it to be, however? Hard to say at this point. **▬ Luke Reilly**



7 "Argh! My neck! I'm not supposed to get dog teeth in it!"

PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: VOLATILE GAMES

DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION

It's a dog, right?

A bloke and his dog. It's a classic combination. Turner and Hooch. K9 and the living Belushi brother. Barf, from *Spaceballs* (half man, half dog – he was his own best friend).

Dead to Rights: Retribution, a "reimagining of the gritty crime drama franchise", capitalises on the special, age-old bond between man and canine with a blast and bite fest set in the morally bankrupt Grant City. Vice-cop Jack Slate and his furry sidekick Shadow will shoot and chew their way through hordes of the city's worst scumbags to expose the kingpins behind the town's decay.

It all sounds painfully generic at this point, but we doubt you'll be playing this for the plot. We weren't exactly salivating about unleashing Jack's "full combat

potential" either – which apparently consists of action staples like using our sidearm "to pick off the enemy at a distance", taking cover, human shields, blindfire, disarms and takedowns. We're interested in unleashing Shadow, however, and taking control of him – but how this will be handled remains unknown.

It is a little odd to see a remake of such a relatively recent title, but it's not without precedent. It happened with *Tomb Raider: Anniversary*, and it's happening with *The Chronicles of Riddick* – reviewed this issue. Are we for remakes? We're certainly not strictly against them, but *Dead to Rights* is a pretty random title to pluck from obscurity for a next-gen reboot.

We'll see if the experiment pays off. **▬ Luke Reilly**

POSSE PILGRIMS

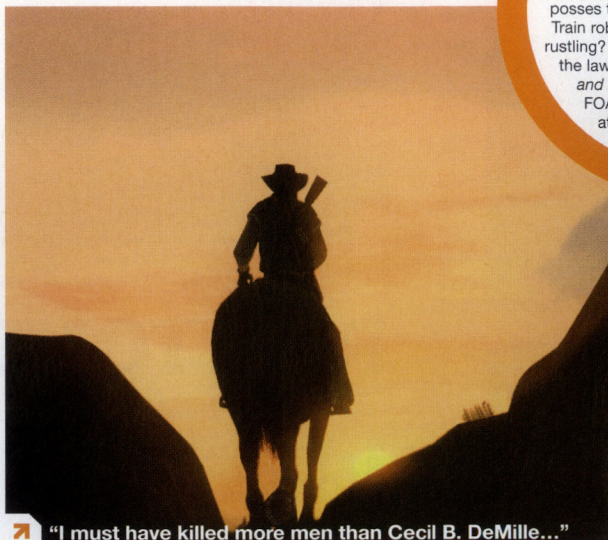
The multiplayer potential here is absolutely barnstorming. Forming online posses to battle against each other? Train robberies? Bank heists? Cattle rustling? Wanted men on the run from the law? Horse chases? *Cowboys and Indians*? We're positively FOAMING AT THE MOUTH at the prospect of such speculation!

IT'S LIKE...

Red Dead Revolver + GTAIV



"Candygram for Mongo! Candygram for Mongo!"



"I must have killed more men than Cecil B. DeMille..."



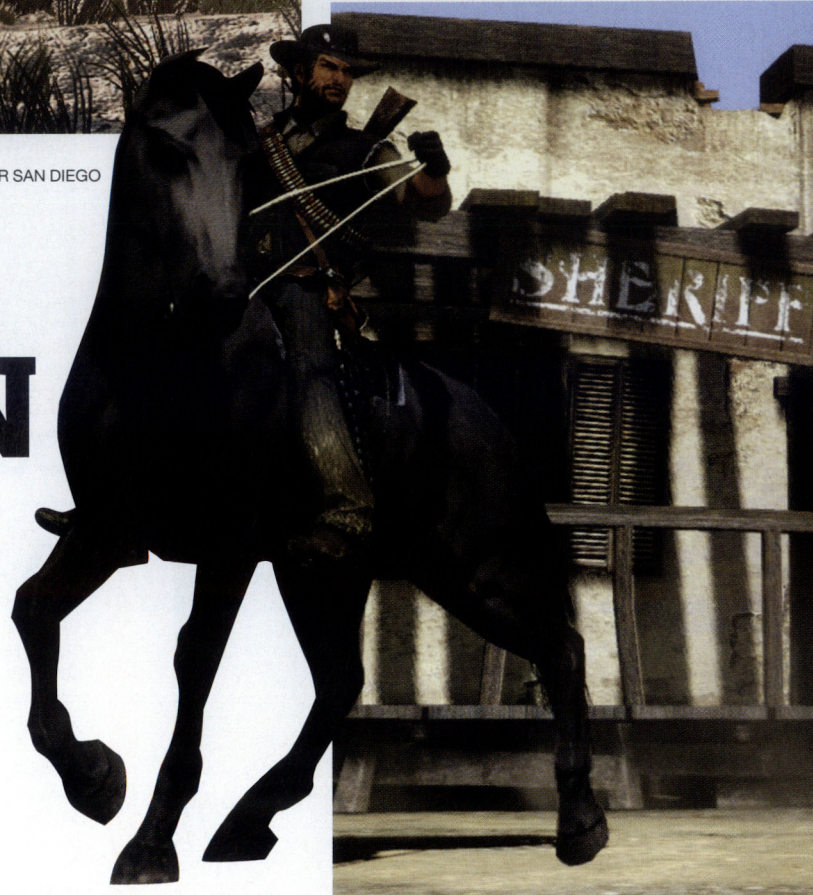
PS3 GENRE: ACTION | RELEASE: TBA 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ROCKSTAR | DEVELOPER: ROCKSTAR SAN DIEGO

RED DEAD REDEMPTION

Proving it was never about the money

As we revealed last issue, the spiritual successor to Rockstar's 2004 *Red Dead Revolver* is due out in Spring this year – and we're very, very excited. Rockstar San Diego is in charge of development, using the proprietary Rockstar Advanced Game Engine, a.k.a. RAGE. As you can see from these screenshots, RAGE looks like it'll nicely adapt to suit wide-open spaces as well as closed, dense urban environments. The draw-distance – how far you can see to the horizon – is astonishing and

it's great to see how versatile the engine is, promising awesome rides across the prairies. We're expecting *Redemption* to be a gritty open-world experience as the potential for exploring the Wild West – inhospitable terrain, outlaws, remote townships – is vast. Fighting across the open land is going to be a lonely experience compared to the relative comfort of Liberty City and the adventures of *Masters Bellic* and *Klebitz*. Keep reading, as we'll have more in-depth news over the coming months. **Paul Taylor**





"Somebody's gotta go back and get a shitload of dimes!" **K**



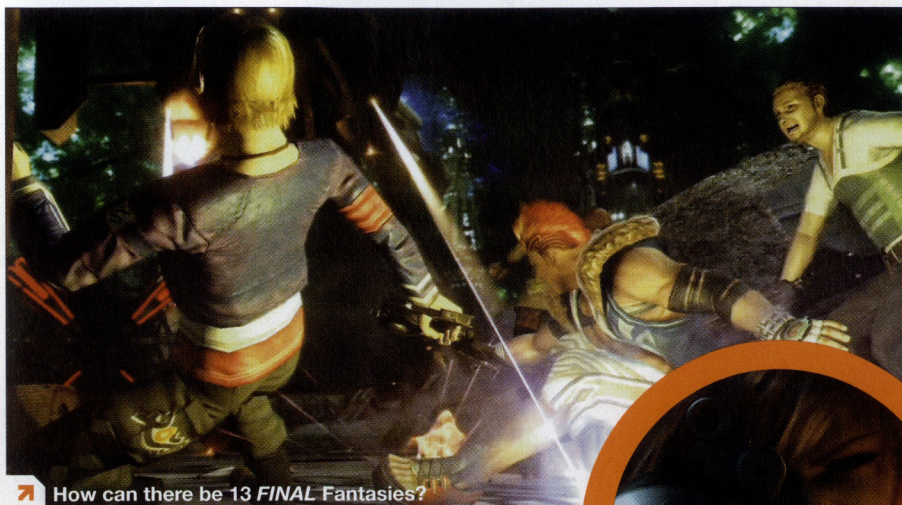
"What in the wide, wide world of sports is a-goin' on here?" **K**



WE SAY

- ↑ **GTA meets Deadwood**
- ↑ **Uncrowded genre**
- ↓ **Not out this second**

OPS IS...
Circling more wagons!



7 How can there be 13 *FINAL FANTASIES*?

PS3 GENRE: RPG | RELEASE: TBA 2010 |
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT | DEVELOPER: SQUARE ENIX

FINAL FANTASY XIII

Robot army takes on hot babe and her metrosexual sidekicks. Discuss

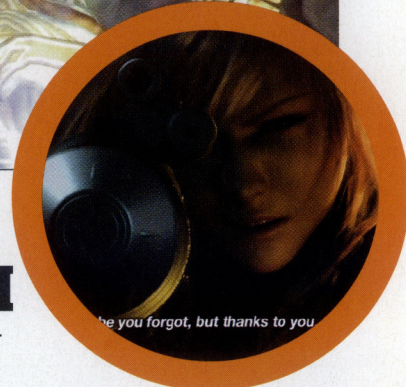
The new *Final Fantasy XIII* trailer will likely encourage a certain amount of trouser-rigidity amongst true *FF* tragics, but it doesn't answer many questions – which is probably largely due to the fact that, in the subtitled translation at least, nobody says anything that makes sense. "How do we complete a Focus we don't even know?" laments one character. Indeed. We'd probably have an answer if we had any idea what the frack that means.

It did, however, give us a far closer look at the characters – *FFXIII* centrefold Lightning, brooding blond bloke Snow Villers, the tiny Oerba Dia Vanille and pistol-packing Sazh Katzroy. The in-game battles featuring the aforementioned heroes in

the trailer were simply peppered with Japanese characters and various two- to three-digit numbers, so they weren't particularly informative. They did look rather arresting, however.

Of course, the thing to keep in mind is that it won't be out for ages. At last year's E3 Square Enix announced that *Final Fantasy XIII* would be released first in Japan in 2009, THEN in North America and Europe. The localisation process isn't going to be over in a weekend or two, so it'll likely be 2010 by the time we see it down here. You can wait, or learn Japanese.

In fact, learn Japanese anyway, and go to Tokyo. Everyone should once. **♫ Luke Reilly**



PS3 GENRE: MUSIC | RELEASE: WINTER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ACTIVISION | DEVELOPER: BEENOX STUDIOS

GUITAR HERO: GREATEST HITS

"Darn you, I won't do what you tell me!"

It's interesting *Guitar Hero: Greatest Hits* will feature Rage Against The Machine's seminal anti-authoritarian anthem 'Killing in the Name'. It is, of course, a fantastic tune. It's not, however, family-friendly. It won't contain the cursing, of course, but we dare say it won't punish you for adding it in yourself. Subsequently, any kid that didn't come down in the last shower will be sounding off like a drunken wharfie to this one – possibly in front of grandma. Which will be awkward.

At any rate, *GHGH* (as everyone is about to start calling it) will feature 48 of the 'best' tracks from *Guitar Hero*, *Guitar Hero II*, *Guitar Hero Encore: Rocks the 80s* and *Guitar Hero III: Legends of Rock*. Fans will

be able to enjoy old favourites as master tracks with updated note highways and all-new gameplay for the drums and mic. Announced so far include 'Them Bones' by Alice in Chains, 'Killer Queen' by Queen, 'Nothin' But A Good Time' by Poison, 'Killing in the Name' by Rage Against The Machine, and 'I Wanna Rock' by Twisted Sister, plus *Guitar Hero III* cult fave 'Through the Fire and Flames' by DragonForce.

The prospect of full-band versions of old GH songs has us moderately interested (both *GHII* AND *GHIII* had better setlists than *GHWT*), but why this isn't DLC, or at least exportable, we have NO idea.

Also, if there's no 'Freebird', there's no deal. Word to the wise. **♫ Luke Reilly**



Words: James Ellis

RETURN OF RAPTURE

BIOSHOCK DIVES INTO THE DEEP BLUE FOR ANOTHER DIP



BioShock's gearing up for a wet-hot return but until now fans have had to chew on tumbleweed conjecture as they wrestled with big questions. How will *BioShock 2* follow an original title lauded for its out-of-the-box freshness? Where will it be set? How will it be different? *OPS* visited the 2K Marin studios in San Francisco to get an exclusive first-look at the next big romp in Rapture. While questions were answered, even more were raised. Prepare for the unknown. **Prepare for *BioShock*.**

The *BioShock* series could be labelled as a first-person shooter, but shooting stuff is not what it's really about. Sure, there are genetic powers, gameplay choices that add spice, and a big soggy city as a unique locale. But it's really about the stuff you don't know. It's about mystery. *BioShock 2: Sea of Dreams* knows that.

There is only one certainty. *BioShock 2* has expectations, and those expectations are that it will be great. The first sold over 2.3 million copies worldwide and garnered the sort of praise reserved for wedding speeches. A good start, but the critics are reserved on this follow-up. *BioShock 2* isn't coming from the gold synapses of 2K Boston, the team who crafted the original, but from 2K Marin, the clan responsible for the largely ignored PlayStation 3 release of the game, and little else.

Marin's studios are lodged in the belly of a renovated aircraft hangar. Opened in 2007, *BioShock 2* is the first test of the studio's ability to skin a pixel. As *OPS* and other journalists are funnelled through the halls, we note that all pivotal pieces of art

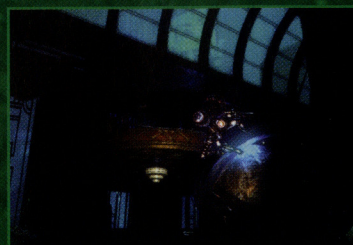
and design have been hidden, leaving the studio team to feign work or dally away on monochrome guts of code. From behind their screens they try to act natural, but they can't hide the fact that this invasion of outsiders has them all holding their breath. If *BioShock 2* is the team's first big chance, our first look will provide an idea of whether they're on the track to success or the expanding wasteland of videogame failure. The pressure is on – particularly for one man.

Jordan Thomas is a young, lean piece of white bread with beady eyes that glint from under a Beatles mop and compliment a Tom Sawyer grin. Well read

and bright, he flaunts a feet-up charisma at odds with his dedication to this job. Prior to this he worked on *Thief III: Deadly Shadows* as a co-designer before being the brain that designed the Fort Frolic level in *BioShock*, considered the best in the game. Now he's Creative Director for *BioShock 2*, and the bloke filling the loafers of Ken Levine, Lead Designer of *BioShock*. Deep in the belly of 2K Marin's complex, Thomas sets himself as he prepares to grant us a privileged look at their toil to date.

"We need to trust you, the player, with harder choices and greater moral agency and allow you to shape your own role in the narrative in a way we didn't touch in the first game," he says. "We think we've done it. To us that means bringing new mystery to Rapture – evolving the Rapture mythos."

The room still has no idea what to expect. On the bus trip to 2K Marin, packed with *BioShock* zealots from every corner of Europe, speculation ran riot. Would it be set in Rapture again or another Atlantis-like city? Perhaps it would be on an island? A sort of *BioShock*





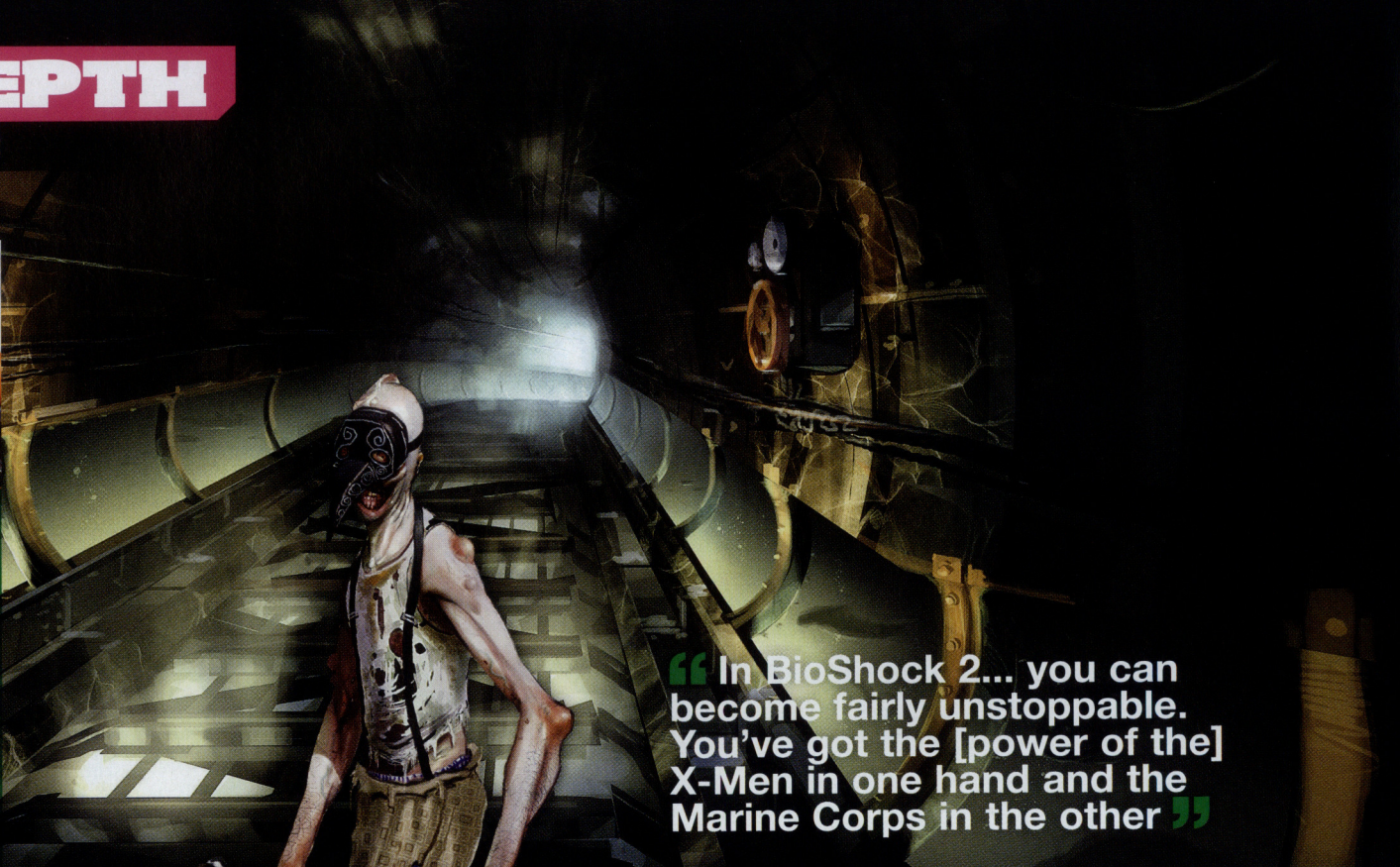
DOWN UNDER WATER

Our 2K Australia mob are heavily involved in *BioShock 2*. While 2K Marin are using the services of their China team as well as other contractors, they consider the 2K Australia crew their sister team. Primarily the guys down in Canberra are working on characters, environments and doing a bunch of other design work.

Jordan Thomas even had some glowing words of praise for them:

"The Australian Team are such bad-asses. So many of the veterans of *BioShock* 2 that worked on the first game are in the Australian shop. And our core tech-team is there and I got to know those guys very well. They're just consummate professionals."

Provided they can eventually do an entire game themselves, it might really put Australian games development on the map! Except, of course, would-be developers would have to move to Canberra.



"In BioShock 2... you can become fairly unstoppable. You've got the [power of the] X-Men in one hand and the Marine Corps in the other"



meets *Lost*. What would the story be about? It was confetti speculation.

Then the demo runs. Groans that sound like they're from twisting pipes call as the screen fades up from black. The sense of dank and dampness assures us we're back in Rapture.

Sidling up to Thomas comes the game's lead level architect, Hogarth de la Plante (who's also, as he later tells us, related to the painter William Hogarth). He takes a commentary position beside the screen.

"There was a lot of speculation about where the second game would take place and we realised early on that returning the player to Rapture was pretty much a given," explains de la Plante.

"But we realised this presented a challenge. We really want to keep the content fresh. So we decided that the shifting of perspectives was a really useful tool for a revisit."

Then a familiar voice from the game chimes in. It's Tenenbaum. "Wake up – you're time for sleeping is over," she says. The perspective on screen is the familiar first-person, but something is different. One of the character's arms isn't an arm at all – it's an industrial sized drill bit. It's a Big Daddy. It hulks forward, using the drill to smash through a barrier, and lands

amidst a pack of splicers. And it's on. The drill punches a hole in one splicer's chest like a tank shell before its weapons puncture the rest. It's a slaughter.

"You're not playing as just any Big Daddy," Hogarth says. "You are playing the very first Big Daddy ever created – the prototype Big Daddy. This means two important things. One: you're free of the conditioning the other Big Daddy's have as part of the Big Daddy/Little Sister relationship, and; two: you get to use plasmids."

On screen the Big Daddy lugs forward and comes to a large room with a huge glass wall that looks out into the ocean.


"But," continues Hogarth, "those easy to kill splicers aren't the only thing you have to worry about in the halls of Rapture. There's someone else who's integral to the story of *BioShock 2* and that someone is threatening and powerful enough to take down a Big Daddy."

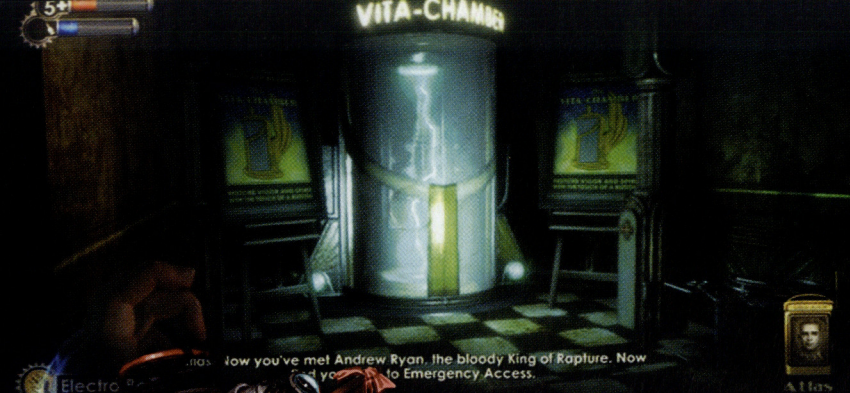
Suddenly, we're not alone.

Squawks ring out overhead, like scratching steel, as a fumbling but acrobatic figure springs out. It's a slimmer, nimble mechanised minx of a thing, a hurling Big Daddy who finds grace midflight before landing like a rocket-propelled grasshopper too heavy for itself. The abject monstrous feminine, she is the Big Sister, *BioShock 2*'s prime nemesis. Metal shanks jut out of her body and jar against her limber movement. She springs what seems to be the length of the room and lands on one edge of the glass wall that buffers the weight of the Atlantic before flashing an "F-You" stare at the screen and scuffling across the glass face, scratching a deep cut as she goes. The glass caves and our Big Daddy is hit with a Poseidon mule kick. It's a knockout flood. At least it should be.

"You're pretty tough as a Big Daddy in your diving suit. You can even take the entire Atlantic Ocean coming in your face," he says.

And he's right. Big Daddy's are the Tonka Trucks of the Rapture toy chest.

 Sexy...



CHEAT-FREE ZONE

What about Vita Chambers that split fans in the first game? As expected *BioShock 2* will include the option to either play with them or without them. However the old cheap spamming technique of attacking a Big Daddy with a wrench, dying, resurrecting, and then continuing ad nauseam has been fixed. Now Big Daddy's will slowly regenerate health over time. If you want to take these other Big Daddy's down, you'll have to expend resources each time.

Little Sister, don't you do what your Big Sister does



It gets up from the ocean floor and does what was impossible in *BioShock*. It walks around the seabed streets of Rapture. Schools of fish tow past, sea shrubs and coral sway, and existence is put into slow motion. Movement is slower, but the neon signs of the Rapture streets bare no urgency. Ethereal music is the cherry on this cream pie and we're in another world, away from the familiar dystopia. q

"Once we decided you were going to play a Big Daddy the obvious choice was to allow you to go outside and explore some of the territory surrounding Rapture on the ocean floor," adds Hogarth.

The demo is not over. The Big Daddy moves to an entrance chamber that drains the water before entering back into drip city. Soon he comes across a Little Sister. *BioShock* waxed eternally about its "moral choices" so it's no surprise these choices return in *BioShock 2*. This time things are a little different. While the choice was previously to harvest (a euphemism to kill) or save each Little Sister (the latter providing less of the series' currency, ADAM), this time being a good sport requires more effort.

"The way you get to participate in the ecology this time is something we call Little Sister adoption."

The Big Daddy opts for temporary sainthood – rather than killing her for her ADAM – and picks up the ghoulish tyke. Together they form a team, with adoption

allowing all sorts of input from the Little Sister during gameplay.

"We're tuning the precise threshold so that it's both interesting and heart warming rather than annoying," says Thomas. "But she does actually both allow you to access story content that you wouldn't be allowed to otherwise and comment on choices that you make."

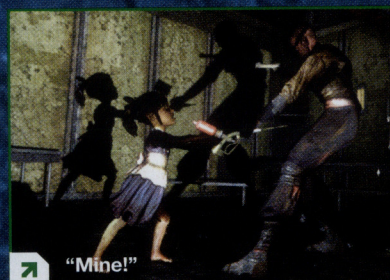
Hogarth continues, "So we're going to go look for an angel. An angel is a dead body filled with juicy good ADAM," he says. "When you have the Little Sister adopted these bodies are glowing, she sort of exposes them. Once you find one you can make the choice to set the Little Sister gathering ADAM from the body. If you decide to deploy her though you are incurring the wrath of Rapture, because a Little Sister gathering ADAM out in the world lures splicers in."

A carcass is promptly found, spurring the Little Sister into the sort of dizzied part living girls reserve for scoring a new Barbie. As she jumps down from the Big Daddy and starts to extract ADAM from the body, a stirring commences in the darkened level above. A gang of splicers smell the extraction – as they always will in *BioShock 2* – and are readying a raid. The Big Daddy gears up to turn the next wave of splicers into the filling for a German blood sausage. Such is the price of morality.

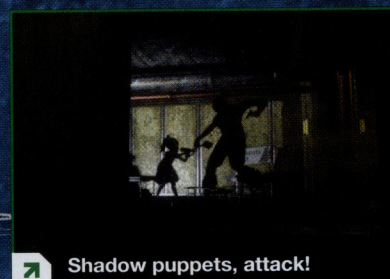
Fortunately the sensation of empowerment has been taken to new



"This won't hurt a bit"



"Mine!"



Shadow puppets, attack!



Ned Kelly – back, and pissed

heights in *BioShock 2*. Before the splicers strike, the Big Daddy lays down a series of plasmid traps around the Little Sister. He switches to the Incinerate plasmid, similar to the first game, and proceeds to imbue each of the thermal traps with fire.

"The plasmid system in particular has deepened for *BioShock 2*," says Thomas. "The plasmids are now tiered. If you invest in Incinerate each individual change you make will, each time you add more ADAM, get you another version which means you can hold it down to release a burst, or ultimately hold the button down and use your hand as a flamethrower."

The splicers charge. A few are hoisted up into the air amidst these snack-sized pillars of fire.

"On the weapons side you get to use

all those weapons in *BioShock* that were lying on the ground and staring you in the face, but you could actually lift. In *BioShock 2* you can grab those and upgrade them over the course of the game, becoming fairly unstoppable. You've got the X-Men in one hand and the Marine Corps in the other."

The Big Daddy dispatches the rest of the thugs – some of which have smartly circled behind his traps – using his rivet gun, drill, and his flame-throwing plasmids. The Little Sister is safe, and the ADAM extracted.

Kind of. A second later the Big Sister herself swings into the area, dances about, and delivers a deep drive to the face of the Big Daddy. The screen goes black. The demo is over.

Stunned silence follows. In minutes the majority of first round questions have been answered – answered and replaced with follow up queries. Pre-empting this rush of confusion, *BioShock 2*'s core brains trust ready up like a crack squad for what turns out to be two hours of interrogation. The Big Sisters are prime currency for debate.

"She's the newest addition to the ecology, a character deeply connected to the fiction. When you interact with a Little Sister – through the adoption mechanic – you're opting into these consensual and dynamic sieges and splicers will come and fight you. But after a certain number of Little Sisters that you've taken away from their Big Daddies, the Big Sister comes and



Handsme...

WHO'S YOUR DADDY?

The team at 2K were at great pains to let us know that being a Big Daddy in this game will be a far better experience than it was during that tacked-on section in *BioShock*. This guy moves a touch faster and is more responsive. The Big Daddy weapons will, of course, be able to be employed. Splicers will be tougher and smarter, too, in order to keep the challenge level up. Big, nastier enemies in addition to the Big Sister were also promised, but 2K were tight-lipped on those guys at this point.

Why the long face?



finds you wherever you are," says Thomas. "When you defeat her you get a specific reward I can't spoil today. I will say that she does change over the course of the game; it isn't the same fight every time."

So what's her backstory? The reply was to become familiar. "We can't talk about that now". Hardly a surprise; *BioShock* is a franchise that's built its success by drip-feeding gamers information. More compelling was how often Thomas and co. would whimper out a titbit and arouse interest before throwing up a suspense-brewing stonewall. For instance, the obvious issue of when the game is set. While the demo we've seen happens roughly 10 years after the events of the first *BioShock*, no one makes the call that it's a sequel. We ask Thomas if we'll be able to visit Rapture when it was in its prime.

"All I can say is if *BioShock 2* had been a pure sequel or a pure prequel we wouldn't be surprising you. The main bulk of the game – of what you just saw – takes place several years after the events of *BioShock*. That's as specific as we can be right now."

At this point something becomes apparent. While some brought in their cynicism of all things sequel to this press event, 2K Marin are treating *BioShock 2* with the same care as a newborn. While they want *BioShock 2* to be a '*BioShock*' game, they're hysteric about it being something fresh. For instance, how will *BioShock 2* fare without the story twist of the original that set talking heads on fire? Will *BioShock 2* have a twist? And if so will it be a contrived effort to

match its predecessor?

Jordan Thomas replies with what he does best. He provides a smartly ambiguous answer that entices you to shut up and trust his creative judgements.

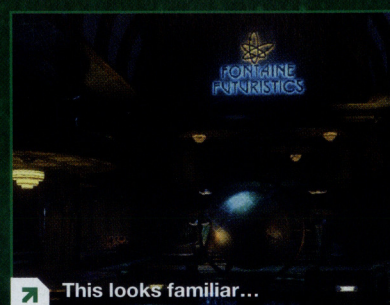
"I think twists can be very powerful. I also think they set expectations in sequels. *BioShock 2* is a very different animal. I can't spoil much about it. We would hate it if any players didn't come back to *BioShock 2* and didn't find themselves surprised."

It's a tough assignment. On one hand *BioShock 2* still has to be a *BioShock* game, still set in Rapture, still with similar gameplay (we're told levelling up and player development will be done almost exactly the same way), and even – as Thomas reveals – starring familiar characters including the return of Andrew Ryan. Yet it has to be the same sort of splash in the face as the original. This also means *BioShock 2* has to outdo the original across the board. After all, while *BioShock* was a brilliant game, its shooting element was at times off par with the other juggernauts of the league. A fact the team acknowledges.

Jean-Paul LeBreton, lead level designer adds, "If we're changing anything with *BioShock 2* it's that we want to have more intentional pacing. In the periods where it's quiet and there's an interesting scene in the environment and [an audio] log to listen to, and then you go into the next room and there's some splicers there and it turns into a huge fight. We're trying to do that more intentionally and I think we're a little bit



Those little girls just get creepier and creepier



This looks familiar...

more confident now in our ability to do first-person shooter things well."

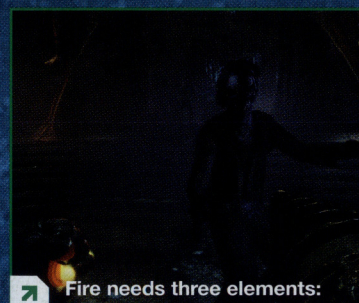
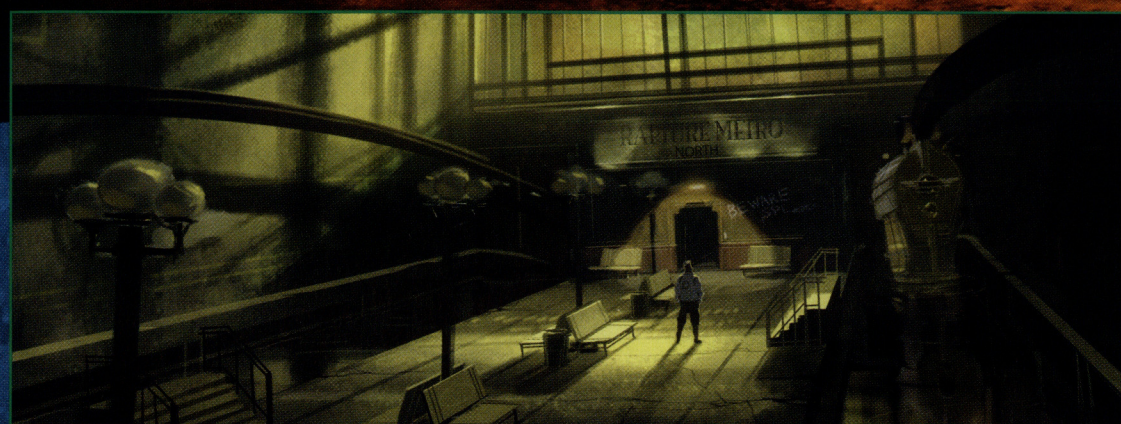
Some sort of level of destructibility is potentially going to be included. During our demo we were particularly impressed with a moment that saw the Big Daddy use his new drill-dash move to burst through a steel door and into a combat arena. Will we see widespread destructibility?

"It's something we're still playing around with because we want to make sure it'll pay-off to the player. A lot of games use environmental destruction purely cosmetically and it's very expensive to do. There is naturally some in the world of Rapture but like all of the things on the gameplay side we want to make sure it ties into player choice and player expression and that there's something intentional about it," says Zak McClendon, the Lead Designer.

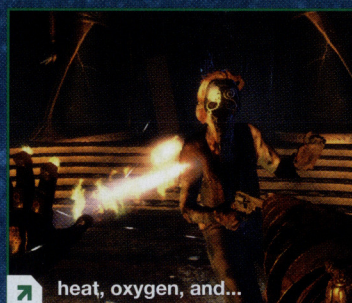
"We're not promising highly destructible environments or anything," clarifies LeBreton, "because the direction

Him? He's 'armless.

“ If we have contributed to the medium shifting even a little with our modest entry then we’ve done our jobs and can go home happy ”



Fire needs three elements:



heat, oxygen, and...



...fuel

that takes your game in is different – we’ve already got enough balls to juggle that will impress people.”

Perhaps the tastiest bit of information was revealed by Senior Producer, Melissa Miller. She copped the question many had been gagging to ask. Will there be multiplayer? She straightened up and replied, “Yes, there will be multiplayer.”

No one said anything immediately afterwards, including Miller. Then the dam broke. We asked if the multiplayer will be as fresh and vibrantly different as the single-player game, perhaps including a splicers-versus-Big Daddy mode (a good bet).

“I can’t tell you anything more than that,” she replied.

Reacting to cynicism that this would be a peace offering to fans in lieu of a single-player game as great as the original, Hogarth chimed in, “We recognise that people might be cynical about a multiplayer mode. A lot of us are big single-player fans also, so in no way does it compromise the single-player experience.”

They espouse all the right things. Rather than jump on the easy sequel bandwagon, 2K Marin are happy to take responsibility for backing up one of the best single player games of the last few years. They’ve fawned over all the possibilities and even scoured the flood of critical comments that came out in the wake of the original’s release.

“In *BioShock 2* we’re pretty mindful about what has been said about the game,” says Thomas. “We’re willing to ignore the parts of it we think would compromise artistically what we’re trying to do and we’re willing to listen very carefully to players who have fresh eyes. They actually play it in a way we never could.”

“You can never tell the player ‘you played it wrong’. That statement doesn’t exist. Anybody who says that should be shot. A player’s experience is unimpeachable, it is something that stands. But what to do about it, what to change is something that comes out of a lot of experience.”

It’s a tough stressful road. And there’s no question the pressure will be on both 2K Marin and Jordan Thomas until *BioShock 2* goes gold and hits the market. Fortunately the ever-optimistic Thomas is clear about what gives him comfort and makes the slog worth it.

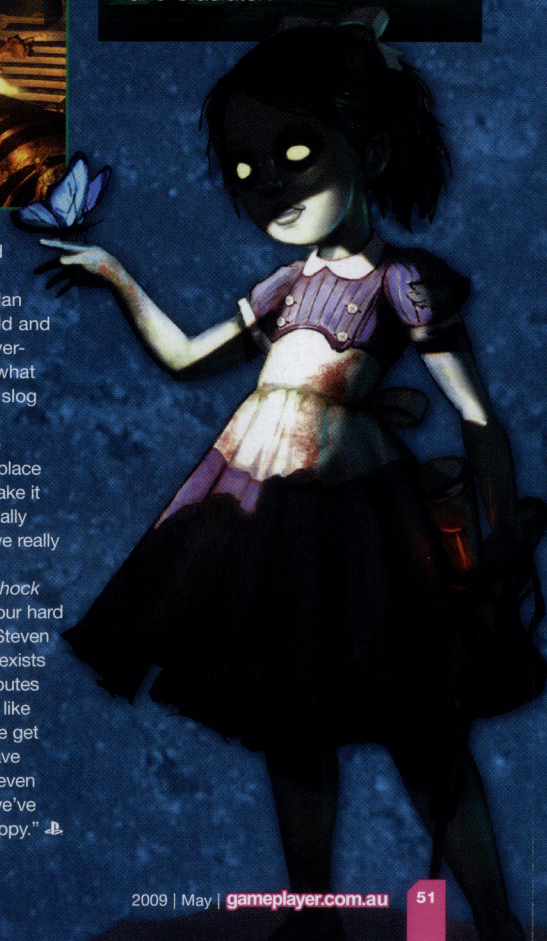
“Number one with a bullet – the audience’s interpretative layer. The place in which they take *BioShock* and make it theirs and reflect it back at me – totally f–king brilliant, man. That is what we really get off on as game developers.”

“Two, I hope that because *BioShock* was successful and because all of our hard work, Ken [Levine], Scott Sinclear, Steven Alexander, because all of this work exists and was successful I hope it contributes to a trend. I hope that other games like *BioShock* boil to the surface and we get to experience those afresh. If we have contributed to the medium shifting even a little with our modest entry then we’ve done our jobs and can go home happy.”



UNDERWATER AT THE MOOFEEES

What the hell is going on with the *BioShock* film? It’s still happening and slated for a release in 2010 with *Pirates* director Gore Verbinski in the director’s chair. It’s being written by John Logan, the bloke who penned *The Aviator* and *Gladiator*.



Words: James Cottee

CELEBRITY GAMING

EXPOSED!

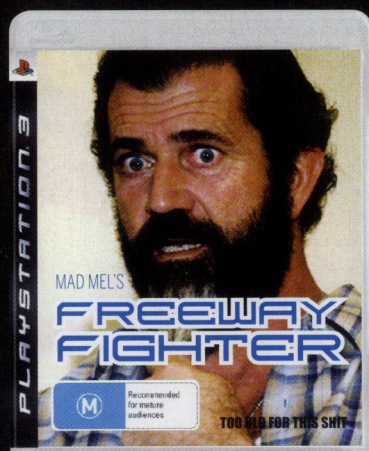
The inevitable future of interactive entertainment

No-one in the world really thinks they're a bad guy. For instance, if you yourself were, say, drunk out of your mind, roaming the streets at midnight with a traffic cone on your head and smashing side mirrors, you'd be utterly convinced that you were being hilarious — it's just the cops who don't get the joke.

The same is true of every tyrant, villain, and vainglorious twerp who walks the earth. They all think they're being awesome. Why doesn't anyone understand?

Until now, all their fantasies of righteous indignation never escaped their skulls. But a new form of indulgence for the ultra-rich is taking shape: the celebrity video game. Vin Diesel was a trailblazer, founding his own studio to make games starring himself. Now Spielberg and Jerry Bruckheimer are getting in on the act — and this is the tip of the iceberg.

There are all manner of rich knobs out there who drop fat wads for Gulfstream 5 jets and solid gold crappers without a second thought. Once they realise that it would only cost a few million to create a game all about themselves, starring themselves, then we're going to see a whole new world of dross on the PS3. If we're very, very unlucky, this is what the near future of gaming could look like...

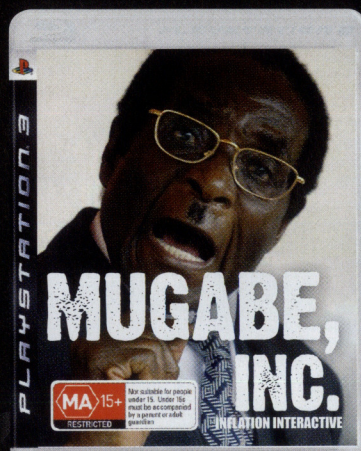


MAD MEL'S FREEWAY FIGHTER

Genre: Driving
Studio: Too Old for This Shit

YOU are recovering alcoholic Mel Gibson, plagued by Zionist conspiracies and a hostile press. Your mission: to drink and drive through the mean streets of Hollywood. To effectively dart between every cocktail party in town, you'll need to engage in daring high-speed pursuits with the cops, and run rival super-stars off the road — "Oops, I did it again!"

Mini-game challenge: When pulled over by the fuzz, use the SIXAXIS controller to charm female police officers. Once they're distracted, your loyal blue heeler Dogmeat can maul them — then you're back on your way!

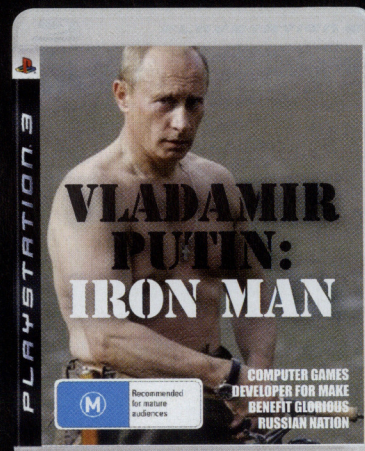


MUGABE, INC.

Genre: RTS
Studio: Inflation Interactive

YOU are Robert Mugabe, misunderstood Marxist president-for-life of the glorious nation of Zimbabwe. In order to shore up the elections, you must direct your fleets of bulldozers to demolish the neighbourhoods of those traitors who dared to vote against you. Opposition leader making a fuss in the papers? Then send the lads around for a quick-time event he won't soon forget.

Mini-game challenge: Twirl the thumb-sticks to keep those presses printing more money, and shake the SIXAXIS controller to choke the life out of the economy. Your wife's overseas shopping trips won't pay for themselves!

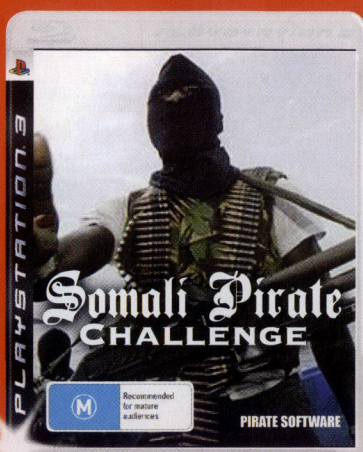


VLADAMIR PUTIN: IRON MAN

Genre: Fighting
Studio: Computer Games Developer For Make Benefit Glorious Russian Nation

YOU are Russian president for life Vladimir Putin, and YOU know judo! Your mission is to fight wave after wave of world leaders with your bare hands, beating some sense into all those who would dare oppose Mother Russia. Throw hatchets! Wrestle a bear! Take down errant tigers with an expertly placed tranq dart! Go fishing with your shirt off! Show those Yankee dogs who's on top!

Mini-Game Challenge: Using the SIXAXIS controller, randomly cut off the supply of natural gas to Western Europe, driving up the price!



SOMALI PIRATE CHALLENGE

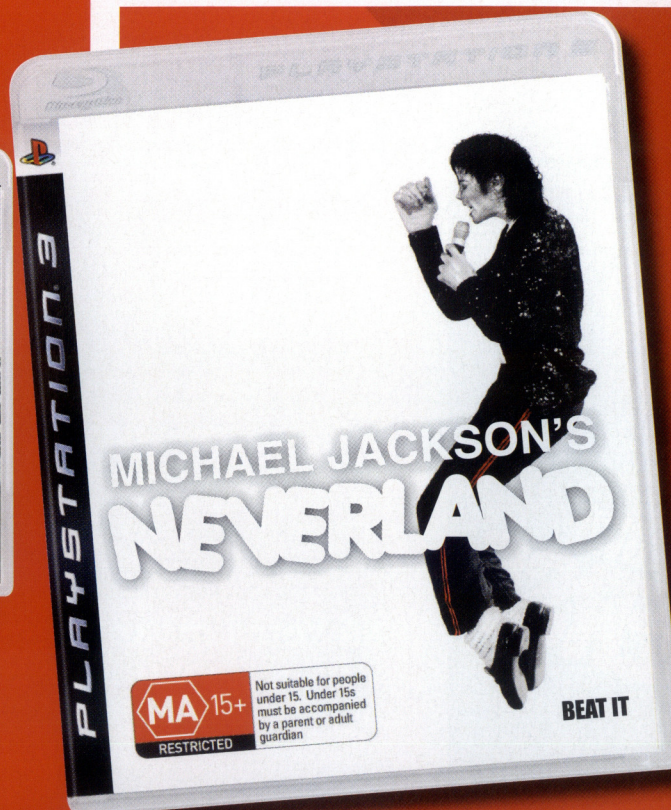
Genre: Naval Combat
Studio: Pirate Software

It's not easy being an East African pirate. With no functioning government, police, law courts, or civil society of any kind, you have to get by any way you can. And if that means hijacking passing supertankers and holding them hostage, so be it!

As YOU capture bigger and bigger ships, you'll have to learn to dodge the patrols of an ever-increasing numbers of foreign naval vessels — the jerks! Too bad for them you've been using your staggering illicit profits to outfit your sloop with machine guns and rocket-propelled grenades. Cop that, infidels!

Mini-game challenge: In a light-hearted break from the murderous larceny of the main game, you'll use the SIXAXIS controller to act out everybody's favourite pirate jokes — for instance, turning a steering wheel that for some reason is attached to your crotch. "Ahhh! It's driving me nuts!"

“ You must work frantically right up to that critical, medal-winning moment, at which point you put down the controller and have a well-deserved break ”

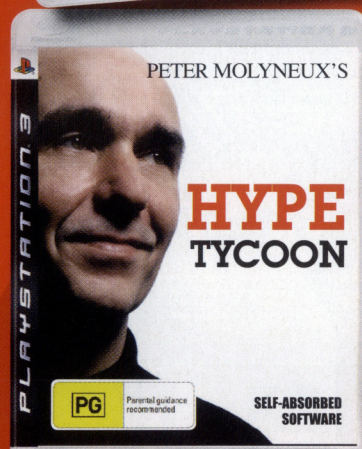


MICHAEL JACKSON'S NEVERLAND

Genre: Theme Park Simulator
Studio: Beat It

Who wouldn't want to be a kid forever? And if you really are a big kid at heart, then why should hanging around with small boys be such a big deal? YOU are the King of Pop, and as your legend grows, you'll fund the development of your Neverland Ranch, placing new and exciting rides to delight and thrill your young visitors. See how many you can get to follow you in synch as you tap the face buttons to perform your trademark Thriller dance routine.

Mini-game challenge: Use the SIXAXIS controller to mix your patented party drink, Jesus Juice (tm).

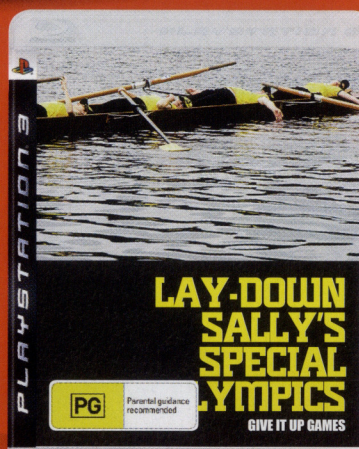


PETER MOLYNEUX'S HYPE TYCOON

Genre: Puzzle
Studio: Self-absorbed Software

YOU are Peter Molyneux, OBE, and multi-award-winning video game designer. After two decades of making ground-breaking god-games, you have begun to notice some ungrateful members of the commentariat take you and your projects less than 100% seriously. This **is** the ultimate god-game: managing the media perceptions of how you make god-games.

Mini-game challenge: Use the SIXAXIS controller to steer through a hectic schedule of E3 press conferences. But beware — since your nose is continually growing longer, it becomes harder and harder not to poke an errant podcaster in the eye. Watch out!



LAY-DOWN SALLY'S SPECIAL OLYMPICS

Genre: Sports
Studio: Give it Up Games

Being a professional athlete is hard work — those nasty guys in the media just don't understand how tough it can be! As the smaller-than-life Olympian Lay-Down Sally, your mission is to overturn boring, conventional notions of 'competition', 'performance', and 'trying your best'. In each contest you must work frantically right up to that critical, medal-winning moment, at which point you put down the controller and have a well-deserved break.

Mini-game challenge: Jolt the SIXAXIS controller to hop between careers, staying one step ahead of disgrace.

CELEBRITY CONTENDERS

We seriously went through an absolute truckload of ideas for this celebrity extravaganza. The 16 games here were the ones we felt were worth taking through to the final stage, but here's a quick glimpse of what didn't make the cut this time around.

Wesley Snipes:
Tax is for Crackers

Where in the World is
Steven Seagal?

Jeremy Clarkson presents:
Too Tall For TV

I'm Yul Brynner and I'm
Dead Now

Bob Hawke's Pro Skater

When Did Hating Ben
Affleck Stop Being Cool?

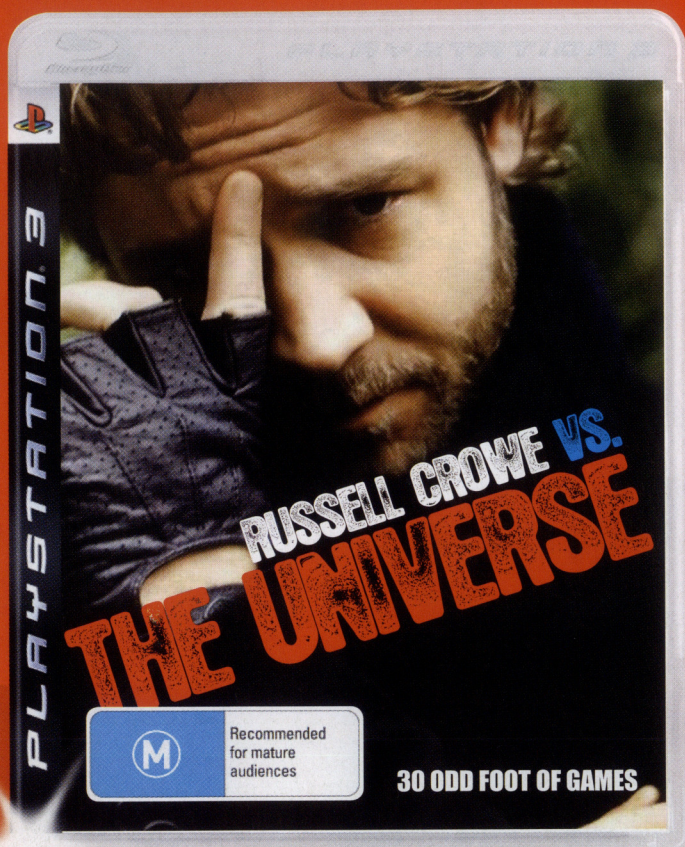
Jean Claude Van Damme
vs. Your Dad

Bruce Willis Needs Hair

What's Cooking with
The Rock?

Takin' Care of Business
with Elvis Presley

Being Matthew
McConaughey



RUSSELL CROWE VS. THE UNIVERSE

Genre: Beat 'Em Up
Studio: 30 Odd Foot of Games

YOU are Russell Crowe, and nobody in the entire world understands you. They can't see beyond the sweat and stubble — they can't see the artist that sits in a dark, distant corner behind your sad, sad eyes. Who are they to call your music "the colourless strums of a subway busker glazed with the deodorized slick of Christian rock"? Well, you'll make them understand. And if they refuse to understand, then you'll make them pay...

Mini-game challenge: When cornered by proles, shake the SIXAXIS controller at just the right moment to belt them with a telephone. On the Nintendo version, you'll be able to use the Wii Remote and Nunchuk in synch for realistic phone cord garroting action.

“You'll make them understand. And if they refuse to understand, then you'll make them pay...”

LOOKALIKES

There have been some absolutely atrocious celebrity cameos in games over past decades or so. Many of them are by otherwise cool actors, but damn do some of them look downright ugly. Here are some of them.

Alec Baldwin
– *The Cat in the Hat* (PS2)

Bruce Willis
– *Apocalypse* (PSone)

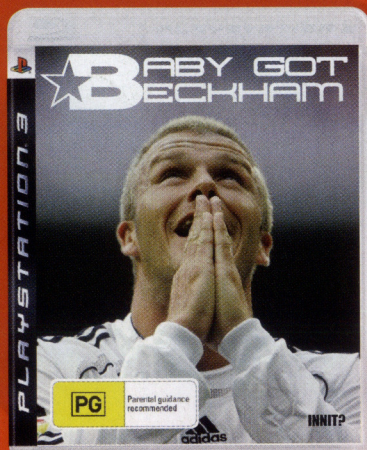
Robert Downey, Jr.
– *Iron Man* (PS3)

Will Smith
– *Bad Boys: Miami Takedown* (PS2)

Tobey Maguire, Kirsten Dunst and everyone else who was in *Spider-Man 3*
– *Spider-Man 3* (PS3)

Jessica Alba
– *Fantastic Four* (PS2)

Harrison Ford
– *Star Wars: Masters of the Teras Kasi* (PSone)

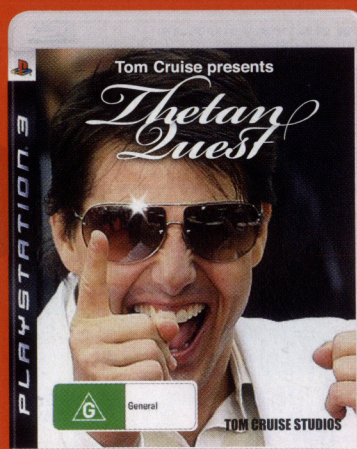


BABY GOT BECKHAM

Genre: Tactical Espionage Action
Studio: Innit?

Sure, everyone may think it's great being married to a Spice Girl and watching your TV from a throne. But if your toilets aren't all made of solid gold, then what's the point? As David Beckham, YOU must sneak out of your Californian mansion to play games on loan for Inter Milan, thus earning the dough you need to upgrade all your shitters from porcelain to precious metals.

Mini-game challenge: Keep those skills sharp! You'll be dodging LA Galaxy fans and Scientology recruiters as you desperately try to keep a figurative fig leaf over what little remains of your privacy.

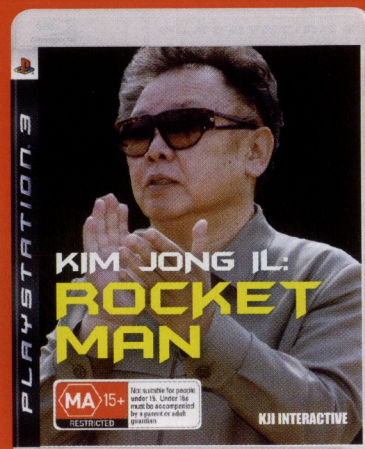


TOM CRUISE PRESENTS THETAN QUEST

Genre: Tom Cruise
Studio: Tom Cruise Studios

YOU are Tom Cruise, a gifted performer-activist, and quite tall for your height. Film acting has made you a multi-millionaire, and now it's time to give something back to the community: the gift of... awareness! Awareness of the dangers of using prescription drugs to medicate your mental state! Awareness of the dangers of women crying out in pain while giving birth! Awareness of the danger of Xenu, the intergalactic creep! The dangers of Thetans — and Nazis!

Mini-game challenge: Use the SIXAXIS controller to jump up and down on talk show couches. Aim for as much nervous laughter as possible from your host before the time runs out!

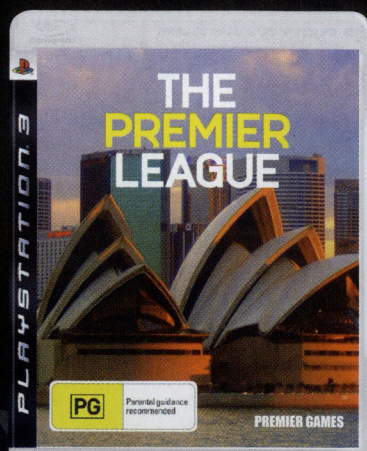


KIM JONG IL: ROCKET MAN

Genre: Business Management
Studio: KJI Interactive

YOU are Korea's Dear Leader, Kim Jong Il, president-for-life of your very own Democratic People's Republic — and you've got a big problem! For while you're adored at home by thousands of synchronized dancers, overseas you're mocked. But you'll show them! By mass-producing meth-amphetamines, counterfeit US dollars, and plutonium for export, you'll earn enough to build the ultimate weapon: the Long Dong III missile.

Mini-game challenge: To help numb your terrible loneliness, use the SIXAXIS controller to aim machine-guns at disloyal citizens trying to escape over the border into China. Traitors! Ingrates! If they refused to eat the corpses of their relatives to survive, then they'll eat lead!

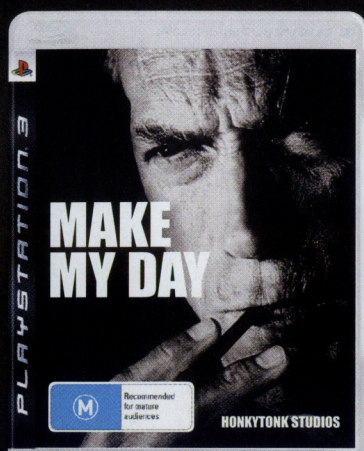


THE PREMIER LEAGUE

Genre: Urban Crime Sandbox
Studio: Premier Games

YOU are the premier of an Australian state, and YOU must suffer an unending stream of newspaper stories about how all your ministers have wild parties in parliament house, sniff each others' chairs, and sell dope to minors. There's only one way to stop those hurtful, hurtful stories: burn down the newspapers! See how much of your capital city you can ruin before the voters kick you out.

Mini-game challenge: Every five minutes you have to sack one of your ministers to save the government's reputation. Hit the face buttons in sequence to put all his possessions in a cardboard box, and then steer with the SIXAXIS to show him the door.

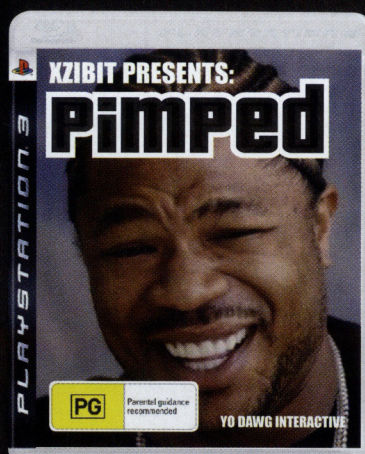


MAKE MY DAY

Genre: Shooter
Studio: Honkytonk Studios

YOU are Clint Eastwood. Specifically, you are a hybrid of every Clint Eastwood character from every Clint Eastwood movie ever made. Armed with six-shooters, shotguns, repeating rifles, magnum hand-cannons, or a MP-40 in each hand, your mission is to mow down the enemies of righteousness, spitting out dry one-liners before every boss battle. The final stage: two hours of machine-gunning Nazis in a sprawling snow-capped castle. Where eagles dare, Clint Eastwood dares harder! Actually, this one could be pretty good. But if Mr. Eastwood gets too hands-on, the cut scenes will drag on forever...

Mini-game challenge: Use the SIXAXIS controller to subtly adjust the levels of furrow on your brow and snarl in your voice.



XZIBIT PRESENTS: PIMPED

Genre: Mechanical Engineering
Studio: Yo Dawg Interactive

Yo, Dawg: YOU are Xzibit, performing artist and automotive engineer. If the man in the street dismisses your achievements out of hand, it's only because he doesn't understand just how tricky it is to put a car in someone's car, so he can drive while he drives. *Pimped* will test players with increasingly difficult tests of recursion, such as putting a picture of a yo-yo-ing dog on a yo-yo so that a certain dawg's dog can yo-yo while he yo-yos, yo.

Mini-game Challenge: Use the SIXAXIS controller to shrug off internet criticism of your incredible machines, by posting messages on your Twitter pleading with the trolls to stop.



BAN HAMMER MASTER

Genre: Rhythm
Studio: Harmless Studios

YOU are South Australian Attorney-General Michael Atkinson M.P., and it's your sacred mission to protect the children and adults of Australia from video game content that might confuse them, hurt their feelings, or otherwise stunt their emotional development.

By hitting the right buttons at the right times, you'll stamp violent games with huge 'REJECTED' rubber stamps, and run enormous petitions requesting an R18+ rating through your jumbo-sized paper shredder.

Mini-game challenge: Position the thumb-sticks to get just the right smug expression for your publicity photos. Remember: free speech isn't a right. It's a privilege!

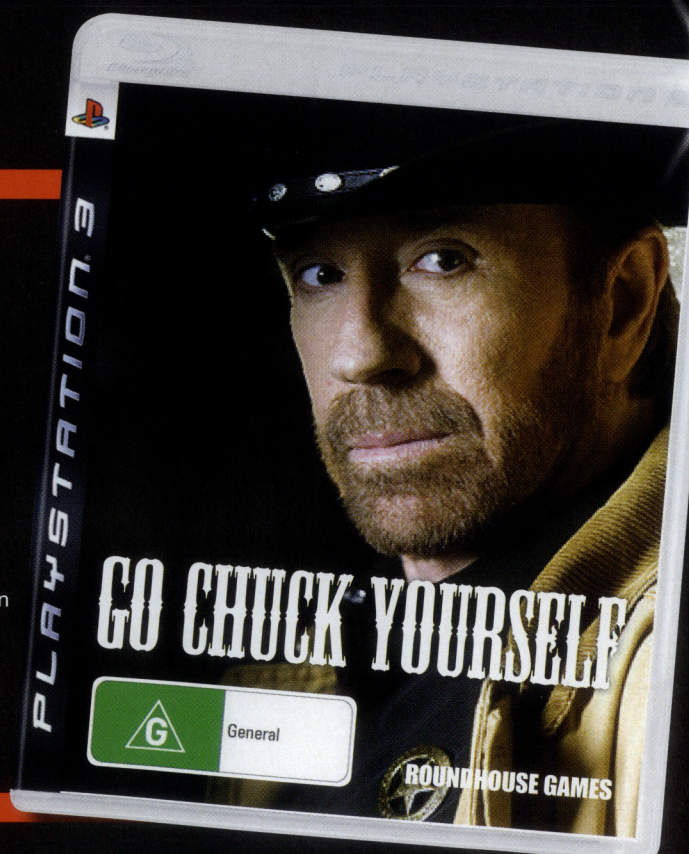
GO CHUCK YOURSELF

Genre: All
Studio: Roundhouse Games

YOU are Chuck Norris, master actor, master martial artist, master of the physical laws of matter, energy, time, and space. YOU are the one and only master of the universe.

Since you have the power to solve any problem, to win any battle, and to seduce any woman — instantly! — the entire game is made up of mini-game challenges. It's a bit like *Bishi-Bashi Special*, or *Wario Ware*, only instead of some Japanese caricature, you're a humanoid slab of quantum testosterone. In a cowboy hat.

Using the SIXAXIS controller, you simply need to take action to win. Confronted by an assailant? Let him learn the hard way that behind your beard lurks another fist. Working out? Demonstrate how your push-ups do not actually push you up, but rather push the Earth away. You don't play this game — it plays you...



WHY SO SERIOUS?

OPS sits down with Ian Ball, Lead Level Designer at Rocksteady Studios, to chat about the caped crusader's latest caper

OPS: For those who have never heard of the new *Batman: Arkham Asylum* game, could you give us an introduction to the plot and the game itself?

JS: The story begins with Batman returning his arch enemy The Joker to Arkham Asylum after apprehending him following his latest sociopathic transgressions. But The Joker had planned his capture to lure The Dark Knight into the depths of Arkham where he could unleash the full extent of his master plan.

OPS: Well, first off the obvious question. *The Dark Knight* has obviously revitalised the Batman franchise in a big way – do you guys see the huge amount of attention towards Batman as a plus or a negative for *Arkham Asylum*, and was it deliberate timing on your part to take advantage of that exposure?

JS: We have been working on *Batman: Arkham Asylum* since early 2007, before *The Dark Knight* movie hit the big screen. The film has been a huge success and this will obviously generate a lot more interest in our game which can only be a good thing. Hopefully we can live up to people's expectations and give the fans the Batman game they deserve.

OPS: In the wake of *The Dark Knight*, and Heath Ledger's performance as The Joker in particular, are you guys worried about how the public will receive *Arkham Asylum* considering that it clearly exists outside that movie's vision of Batman? Or do you see it as a chance to distinguish yourselves and push your own idea of Batman forward?

JS: I think it's a chance to make the Batman game that we've always wanted to play, and one Batman fans will love. *Arkham Asylum* is based on the comic book license; 70 years of great characters and great stories. This has given us a lot of freedom to choose the villains we want to use, the location where the story takes place, freedom which we wouldn't have had if we were working on a movie license.

OPS: The story looks set to feature all the major villains in the Batman universe: The Joker, Two-Face, Scarecrow, etc. Has this given you any problems with regards to the game's narrative? Has it been difficult to juggle all of these iconic villains?

JS: Paul Dini, one of the writers on *Batman: The Animated Series*, worked with us to create an original storyline incorporating the best villains from the Batman universe. Killer Croc, Harley

Quinn and many others play their part, but the main focus is obviously on The Joker and it is his relationship with Batman that drives the narrative.

OPS: We love the way that *Arkham Asylum* is taking a really fresh approach to the Batman license – the idea of playing as Batman through a more focused, third person, investigative game is intriguing – could you give us an overview of how the core gameplay will work in *Arkham Asylum*?

JS: There are many different elements to the core gameplay including combat, exploration, forensics, puzzles and boss fights so let me give you an overview of just one area I'm really excited about: Invisible Predator. Batman is all about fear. We've incorporated this fear into the core gameplay by giving you the choice whether to takedown someone silently, and their buddies will be none the wiser, or leave them dangling from the roof, screaming and shouting, letting everyone in the room know you are there. Do this and watch as The Joker's henchmen become more and more nervous, pairing up, searching the room for you. Continue to pick them off one by one by gliding down from the rafters, using Batarangs to knock them down, exploding walls into them to knock them

▶ "I'm Batman"




▶ "I'm Batman" "We heard, we heard!"




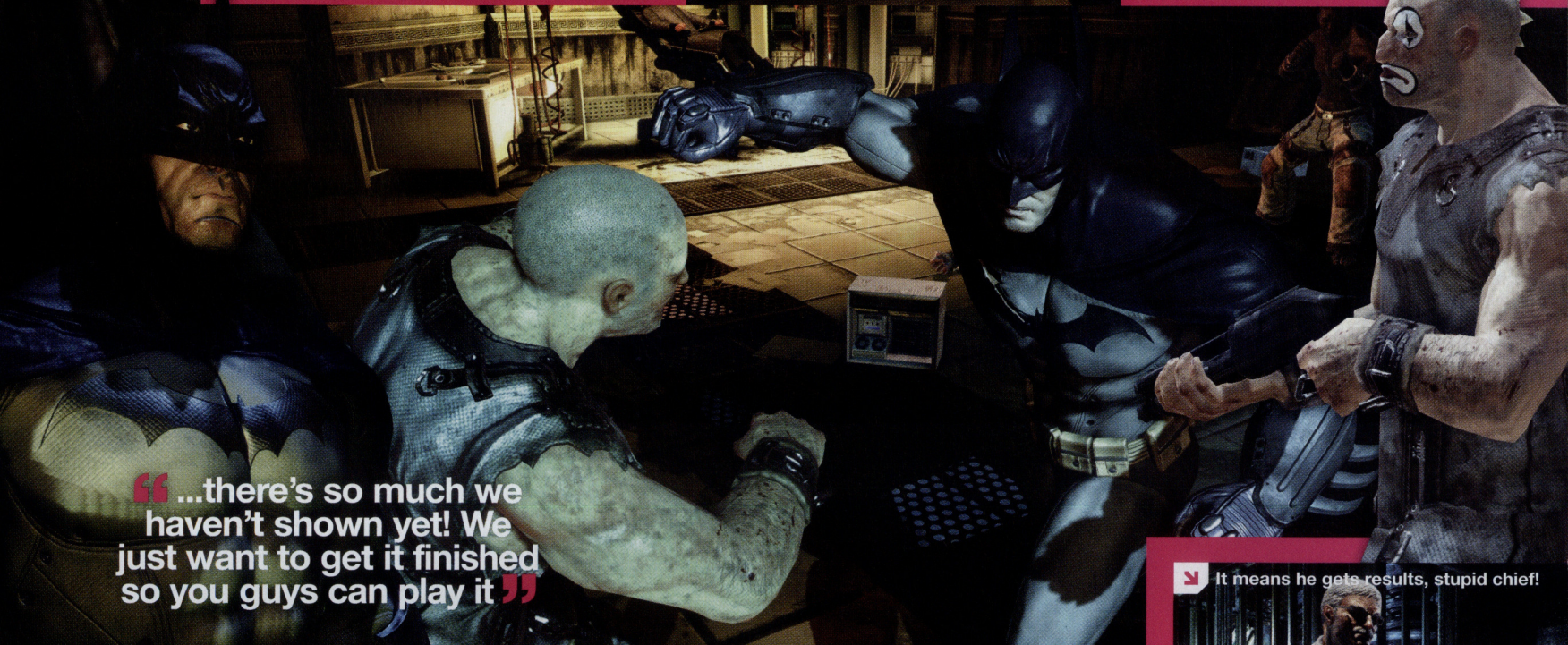
▶ Batman's pits: They shoot Batarangs



Softly, softly... 



 "Shoryuken!"



"...there's so much we haven't shown yet! We just want to get it finished so you guys can play it"

out until there is only one left. Terrified, begging for mercy, blind firing around every corner, while you just sit and watch him, waiting for you moment to strike. It makes you feel very powerful!

OPS: The most obvious thing to do with the Batman licence would be to create a more general bog-standard action title; what inspired you guys to go in this innovative direction? And, close to the end of development, do you feel like the team made the right decision?

JS: Why would we want to create a "bog-standard action title"? We're all gamers, we love playing great games and these are the type we want to make. The game is getting a lot of good press, people seem to love the trailers and screen shots that have been released, there is already a lot of excitement about it and there's so much that we haven't shown yet! We just want to get it finished so you guys can play it.

OPS: *Batman Arkham Asylum's* combat system looks like a lot of fun, can you give us the lowdown on how it works? We've also heard that there'll be some pretty epic boss battles – can you

perhaps elaborate on this a little?

JS: The combat controls are very simple. Your basic moves are strike, stun and counter, but it's how you use these moves that make all the difference. As you build up your combo, Batman starts to flow effortlessly between punches and kicks, ducking under attacks before sending thugs flying in all directions. It feels very satisfying to face off against a room full of enemies and take them all down without them landing a blow. As for the boss battles? You've seen the size of Killer Croc? Well there's bigger and more terrifying things in Arkham than him! I can't say anymore that that at the moment.

OPS: We've noticed a lot of similarities with other top-tier games such as *Metroid Prime*, *BioShock*, and *Dead Space*, especially with the ability to scan your environment – is this coincidental or deliberate? And could you go into detail regarding how all the scan modes in *Arkham Asylum* work?

JS: Batman is the world's greatest detective so we wanted to let the player experience this in game. The Detective Mode allows Batman to scan the environment but also to do much more. He can scan a room to identify the location and weapons of enemies in his current proximity and also use this as a forensics scanner to analyse a crime scene if he needs to track someone or something down. He can then extract relevant information such as fingerprints or DNA evidence and use this to trace the targets movement.

OPS: At this stage the game is looking pretty incredible from a visual standpoint – how did you guys go


about designing *Arkham Asylum* – did you go from representations in previous *Batman* comics or movies, or were your designers simply allowed to go crazy?


JS: We were allowed to create our own interpretation of Arkham; we did a lot of research on American asylums and prisons such as Danvers State Hospital and Alcatraz. We also looked at the history or Arkham Asylum itself, about it originally being the family home of Elizabeth Arkham, and found out some surprising secrets about other locations on the island. We then pulled all this information together and built it into the story. There are lots of little details dotted around the game that reflect this rich history.

OPS: Speaking of the game's visuals – the game runs on the Unreal 3 engine, which has struggled notoriously on the PS3's hardware. Have you guys had any difficulties during development with the PS3 – how are you guys finding the development process?


JS: There are always struggles of some description when making video games. You want to push every aspect to their limits, higher-res textures, more complicated AI, more characters on screen at once and so on. Each console has its own specific requirements but as long as you respect these you can get great results on each platform. We are very happy with the results on PS3. Overall, the Unreal 3 engine works great and has allowed us to concentrate on making the game fun without us needing a full team of engine coders.

OPS: Many gamers have been burned in the past by games based on big licences – what would you say to fans that are cynical with regards to *Batman: Arkham Asylum*?


JS: You won't be disappointed this time. 

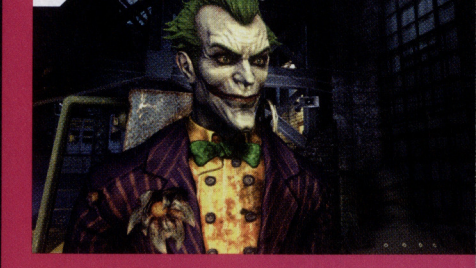
 It means he gets results, stupid chief!




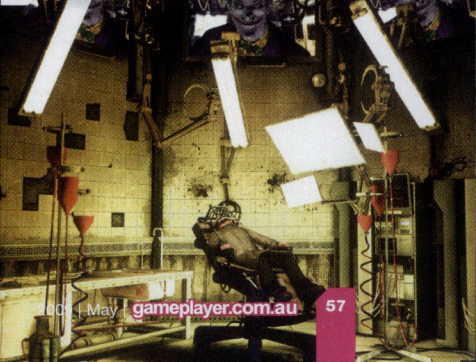
 Bad moon rising



 "Funny how? Funny like a clown?"

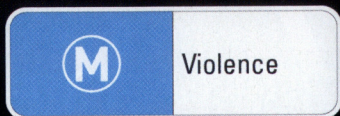


 "Hey, where's my regular dentist?"



EAT THAT FAT BOY!

25 YEARS OF GAMING GOING UP IN SMOKE



PLAYSTATION 3



XBOX 360

XBOX LIVE



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We choose to review our games on a super-slick Full HD 1080p 40" Bravia X-series for the best picture possible. This sucker melts eyeballs!



“It’s clearly a game that sounded a lot better over a couple of Newcastle Brown Ales...”

Wheelman

REVIEW RATING

PlayStation
GOLD AWARD

10 Incredible: Perfection is relative and elusive, and no game will ever be perfect. Our 10 doesn't mean a game is flawless, it means a game has done everything it set out to do in an amazing fashion and thus it deserves our highest possible praise.

PlayStation
SILVER AWARD

9 Excellent: An outstanding game, either limited by its scope, sequel status (and lack of improvement) or a few minor blemishes from being a 10. Likely one of the very best in its genre, a 9 comes with high praise.

PlayStation
BRONZE AWARD

8 Great: Still well ahead of the pack in most departments, despite a few issues here and there. Thoroughly recommended.

7 Good: A robust package that does a solid job despite a bunch of moderate problems. Enjoyable in parts, just not fantastic overall.

6 Decent: This game will have some noticeable flaws that may make it hard to recommend to those who aren't fans of the genre, but it will do more right than it does wrong. Just.

5 Mediocre: A conceded pass, if you know what we mean. Half okay, but half-busted. Might scrape by for fans, but few will want to play a game that half sucks.

4 Poor: Anything below 5, strictly speaking, is a fail – but there are degrees of 'bad' just as there are degrees of 'good'. A 4 is unrefined, partially broken and poorly designed.

3 Very disappointing: Things start to go very wrong here – fundamentally flawed in many ways, boring and close to pointless.

2 Terrible: Virtually nothing good here at all, and definitely not worth the effort of removing the wrapper.

1 The worst: Reserved for the very worst gaming could ever offer. A broken, offensive mess without a single redeeming quality.

IN REVIEW

The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena

PlayStation®
Official Magazine - Australia

**BRONZE
AWARD**



Dropping the soap always has consequences – even in the future



INFO

GENRE: SHOOTER
RELEASE: APRIL 2009
DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI
DEVELOPER:
STARBREEZE STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1-12
PRICE: \$119.95

THE CHRONICLES OF RIDDICK: ASSAULT ON DARK ATHENA

A lights-out knockout



“Woah, watch where you point that laser-pointer!”

“Sigh...”



WORSE THAN BETTER THAN
METAL GEAR SOLID 4 THE DARKNESS

For some reason it just didn't sell. 2004's *The Chronicles of Riddick: Escape from Butcher Bay* had critics throwing palm branches in front of it, spouting ballads about its evolutionary visuals, moody storytelling, uncanny variety, and an attitude that would've out-yelled a podgy lesbian biker on the rag. For all intents and purposes it was a better game than *Pitch Black* and *The Chronicles of Riddick* were films. Some claimed it was the best title based on a film franchise since *Goldeneye*. But it sold like a wet dog.

Smartly then, when Starbreeze Studios was given the green light to go ahead with *Assault on Dark Athena* – a brand new Riddick campaign – it decided to throw *Butcher Bay* into the package with a renovation that'd leave Jamie Durie feeling less like a real man. It's a cheeky force feed, but given *Assault on Dark Athena* is an outstanding campaign in itself, gamers should be prepared to open their gobbs and smile. If Riddick wasn't worth adopting before, he's worth it now.

SHACKLE ME UP

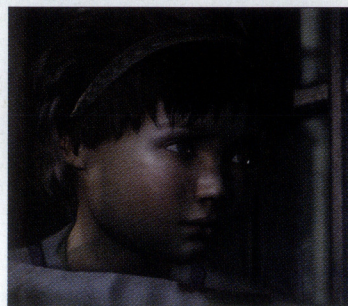
Escape from Butcher Bay is still without proper peer, unable to be pigeonholed. It's not a shooter – though there's shooting in it – and it's not a straight stealth game, though there's quite a lot of that in there, too. Nope, it's a prison game; *Prison Break* set 10 million light years away.

The setup is simple. Galactic bad boy Riddick is nabbed by his favourite bounty hunter, Johns, and bundled down

to Butcher Bay for a fat paycheque. The problem for Butcher Bay is that Riddick is the galaxy's greatest warrior, escape artist, gunslinger, and smart-arse rolled into one; and he's out to make good on his skills.

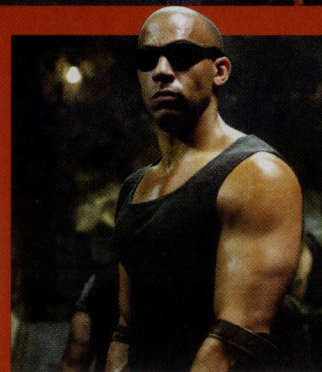
Escape from Butcher Bay is influenced by character and story rather than convention. As Riddick sets out to escape this space Alcatraz the nature and dynamic of the game changes. First, he's a standard inmate, leeching information out of his fellow cell dwellers and undertaking missions in a vein similar to old-school adventure romps. Then he's a brawler, fighting from a theatrical first-person view. Eventually he finds his way to the inner guts of the prison, obtains his legendary eyeshine that allows him to see in the dark, and turns into the menace from a slasher flick, gutting guards from behind and shooting out lights to create ambush spaces. Every so often Riddick also gets his mitts on some trigger-laden hardware and the action blows through the roof to 11. It's an action buffet.

However, apart from the lavish new texture work that's particularly spectacular in the game's final sterile environment, almost nothing has changed in the gameplay stakes from the Xbox original. In fact, the big criticism of the first game has remained. Despite all these snazzy styles in the game, gamers get little choice on when these play styles can be utilised. If you're playing a shooter section of the game, for instance, it's nigh impossible to try and apply stealth. Likewise, if you're



bored of sneaking about and want to steal a guard's gun and go postal, you can't as 90 per cent of the game's weapons are DNA-locked, meaning Riddick's unable to pick up and use a stray piece. The most frustrating scenario is being spotted during many of the game's all-too-delicate stealth sections and having access to nothing but a knife to save yourself from a squad of armed soldiers. There's naught to do but cuss.

Ultimately, these are only minor annoyances. We still highly recommend playing *Escape from Butcher Bay*, and playing it first. It's a vibrant escapade with plenty of flowing merlot and angst, and the new visuals dominate most native next-gen fodder. Playing it before *Assault on Dark Athena* also does something else. It provides a rare insight into game development with gamers able to see how the new *Dark Athena* successfully buffs up most of the crusty chinks in *Butcher Bay*'s armour.



RETURN OF RIDDICK?

Old Vin Diesel is seeing something of a resurgence at the moment off the back of both *Babylon A.D.* and the new *Fast and Furious*. Apparently, Diesel has also been sounding off on details of the new Riddick film. Unlike the big budget *The Chronicles of Riddick*, this next flick is out to return to its low-budget roots. David Twohy, the writer and director of the first film, is writing the script. “The story will return to a *Pitch Black* [sensitivity] while servicing the mythology that's been enhanced in *Chronicles of Riddick*,” said Diesel.

“If *Escape from Butcher Bay* is about escaping oppression, *Assault on Dark Athena* is Riddick's bloody retaliation”



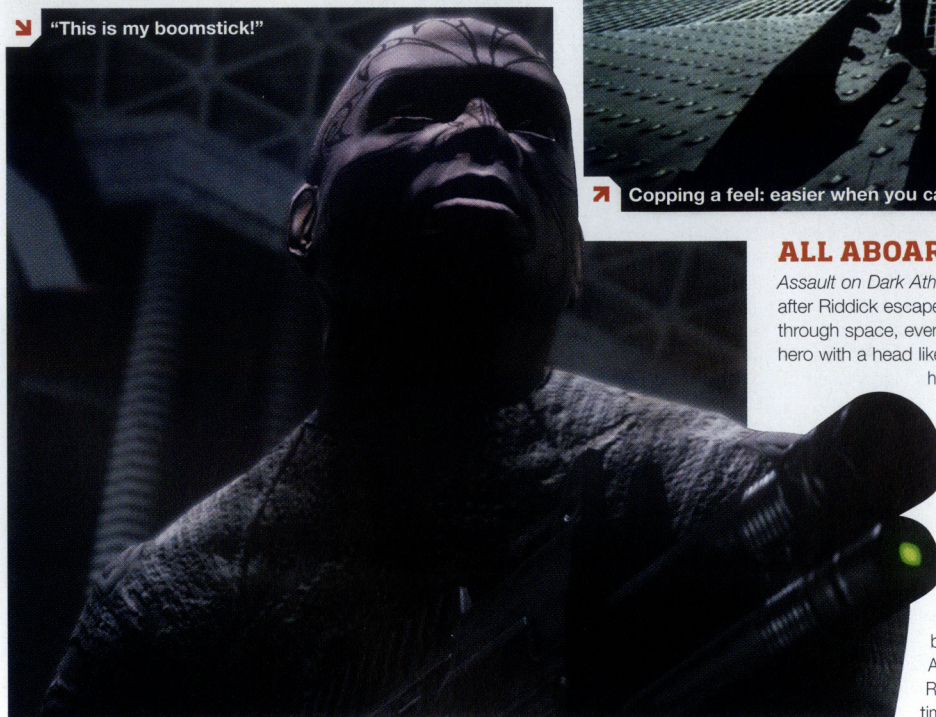
The relay-race didn't go to plan

HIDE AND SEEK

Yes, there's Deathmatch, Capture the Flag, and Butcher Bay Riot game types, but we were only interested in Pitch Black mode, the one that got us frothing like a mastiff in a kitten show. This drops players into a dark level with nothing but the flashlight on their firearm. But here's the catch – one player is Riddick. Armed only with his Ulak blades and night vision, it's him against the rest. Whoever kills Riddick, becomes Riddick. To be honest this wasn't quite as fresh as we had hoped. The levels are a bit flat and disinteresting, lacking any interesting nooks, and player movement seems too fast. We'll let you know if we change our minds next issue after we get a chance to play online.



▶ "This is my boomstick!"



▶ Copping a feel: easier when you can see in the dark

ALL ABOARD

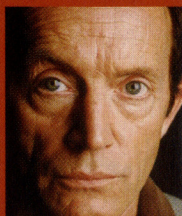
Assault on Dark Athena is set immediately after Riddick escapes Butcher Bay. Drifting through space, everyone's favourite anti-hero with a head like a shaved testicle, finds his ship entangled in the Dark Athena's tractor beam. However, even Riddick has seen *Star Wars* so he promptly hides in a dark crevice until creepy Captain Reeves, a female merc who'll kill to pass time, moves back onto the Dark Athena, ignorant of Riddick's presence. It's time to kick arse and

chew gum – and Riddick is all out of gum.

This dynamic adds a lot of the chilli to Dark Athena's con carne. If *Escape from Butcher Bay* is about escaping oppression, *Assault on Dark Athena* is Riddick's bloody retaliation. He's not hiding from the monsters on the ship, as he explains to young orphan Lynne Silverman, he's "hunting" them. Riding the Riddick train, players become the beast from *Alien*, the butcher from any slasher flick.

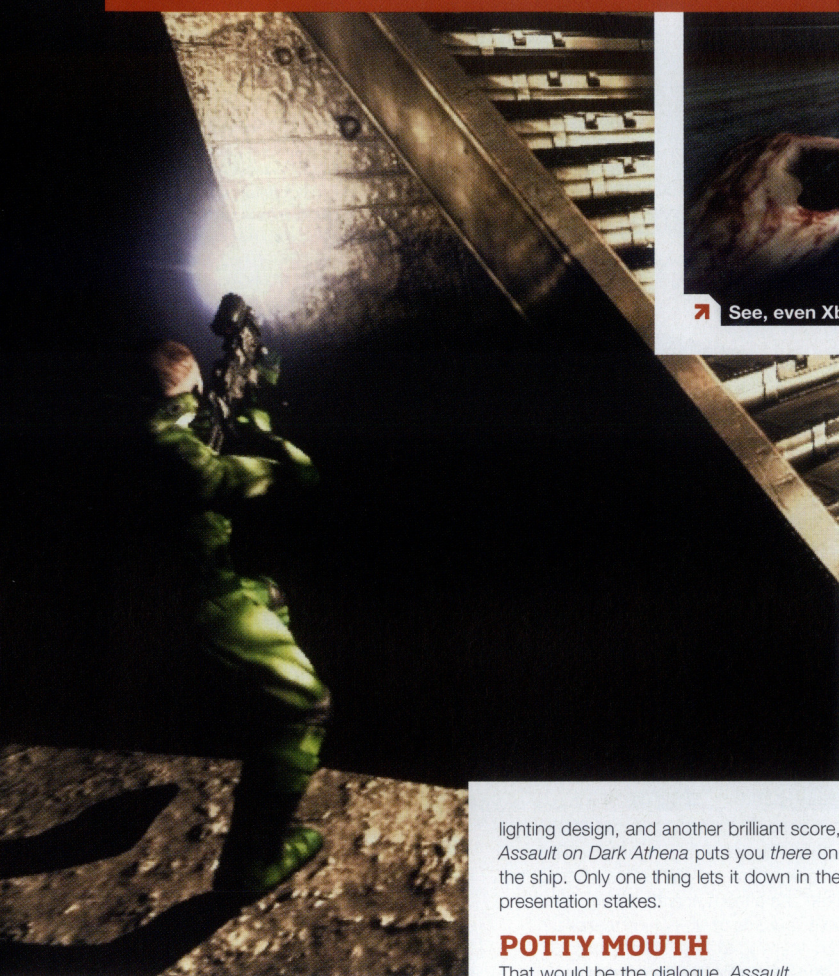
This focus on aggression is easily seen in the campaigns extended use of hardware. Riddick has access to a larger arsenal of meaty boomsticks and melee weapons, including the fancy Ulak blades he can use to turn an unsuspecting guard into a seasoned space kebab in half a second.

Even with no guns available – still the case for a lot of the game – the gurus at



LANCE IS THE MAN

Lance Henriksen is one of those underrated actors that should be spending his time sucking back pina colodas from boob-shaped glasses on a tropical beach instead of appearing in the B-grade schlock he usually does. He voices the character of Dacher, a prisoner, in *Assault on Dark Athena*, springing the character into the third dimension with his performance.



See, even Xboxs in the future red-ring

Don't switch the blade on the guy in shades, Corey Heart says so



Starbreeze have conjured up a way to avoid the annoying sense of bringing a knife to a gunfight we mentioned earlier. As opposed to standard guards, many of the enemies on the ship are cyborg drones with guns for arms. After Riddick kills one he can hold their body up as a shield and fire off a few shots from their arm canon. While he can't move about, this mechanic alleviates the frustration mentioned above without compromising the game's balance.

Despite the bolstered mechanics the glue that holds *Assault on Dark Athena* together is the same stuff from *Escape from Butcher Bay* – and that's immersion. Like *BioShock* or *Metal Gear Solid 4*, *Riddick* is not a game that sells well to those who poke their head into its backyard for five minutes. It's an experience tied into exploring a space – a space where players can suspend their disbelief and wilfully turn into hallucinating baboons due to a few standout elements. The level design is exemplary. While we at OPS have never seen the guts of a mercenary spacecraft, we buy what we see here. Like the ship in *Dead Space*, there's a convincing façade of function to everything. Coupled with the brilliant

lighting design, and another brilliant score, *Assault on Dark Athena* puts you *there* on the ship. Only one thing lets it down in the presentation stakes.

POTTY MOUTH

That would be the dialogue. *Assault on Dark Athena* wins the meat tray for out-whoring its competitors in terms of vulgarity. In fact, one rogue NPC Riddick meets aboard the Athena, named Jaylor and played by a rookie actor ripe for exploitation, out-rots the filth sprouted by Brian Cox after he gargled a turd and voiced the snuff lord in Rockstar's banned *Manhunt*. In one exchange he calls Riddick the "c" word while roaring his intentions to murder a woman in the next cell and then "f" her. While videogames writers are still wrestling with this adolescent medium and are out to motivate players rather than tell a story, the brainless application in this case has cheapened the package.

CRASH LANDING

There's another drawback that keeps *Assault on Dark Athena* from scaling loftier heights. While cruising around on the Dark Athena is, pound for pound, more of a polished experience than that of *Escape from Butcher Bay*, Riddick at one point leaves the ship. We don't want to spoil the story, but we'll say that this action and platform-centric stretch of play feels misguided and out of place, even if the scenery is stunning and players

experience new weaponry and tough-as-hell enemies.

While the single-player campaign isn't quite as consistent as it could've been, *The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena* does ship with multiplayer modes (see 'Hide and Seek') to bolster its value. As usual we'll get back to you on how they play in an online review, but offline players should be aware that none of the game modes support split-screen play, just online and LAN.

Provided you can stomach the content and have a soft spot for the hard Vin Diesel, *The Chronicles of Riddick: Assault on Dark Athena* is worth your sweat. While it's a pricier title, the combination of two great campaigns equals a respectable 20+ hours of gameplay. During that time you'll scrape through the depths of a dank mining prison, hunt mercenary flesh on a bent ship, and get into first-person fisticuffs and blazing shootouts. All with Diesel's hoarse bark tossing out egocentric remarks along the way. What's not to like?

James Ellis

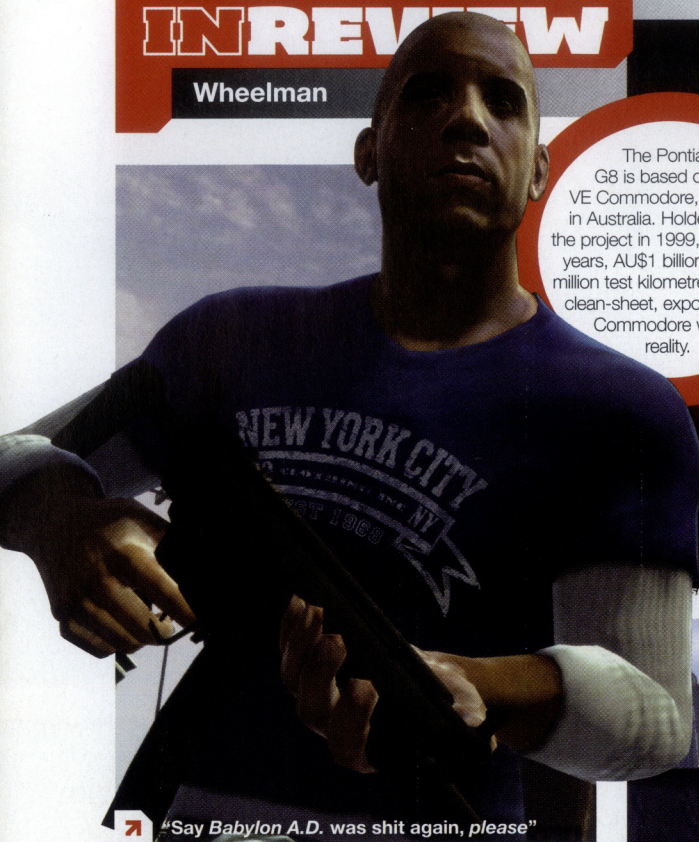
FINAL SAY:

- You feel like galactic punk Riddick!
- *Butcher Bay* is still worth finishing, and *Assault on Dark Athena* rocks out
- Dialogue in *Dark Athena* tries hard to offend
- Some sections of play bite slightly

VERDICT:

A hodgepodge of intergalactic hard arse, this is a must for those wanting something moody and fresh.

8

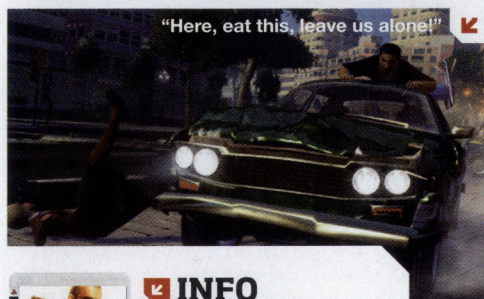


The Pontiac G8 is based on the VE Commodore, and built in Australia. Holden began the project in 1999, and seven years, AU\$1 billion, and 3.4 million test kilometres later this clean-sheet, export-friendly Commodore was a reality.

The most famous Pontiac G8 owner is 50 Cent. However, even his seal of approval couldn't save the G8 Sport Truck (a Holden VE Ute, which would appear to Yanks as a modern-day Chevy El Camino). GM decided not to import it for US consumption.

The production version of the G8 GXP packs GM's 6.2L LS3 V8 under the bonnet, which produces 309kW and 550Nm of torque. As a result, standstill-to-60mph (97 km/h) is over in 4.5 seconds. The top speed is electronically limited. To 250km/h.

"Say Babylon A.D. was shit again, please"



You're doing it wrong

WORSE THAN THE FAST AND THE FURIOUS **BETTER THAN** THE PACIFIER



INFO

GENRE: ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: MIDWAY STUDIOS
NEWCASTLE/TIGON STUDIOS
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$109.95

WHEELMAN

The reasonably quick and the mildly annoyed...

Milo Burik. He talks a tough game for a man named after a kitten, or powdered energy drink. Seriously, he speaks like a man who's been gargling gravel since he was 12. The dialogue in *Wheelman* is actually a lot funnier than Midway probably realised – for all the wrong reasons.

So, is it worth playing? Not especially. If you only play one game starring Vin Diesel this month, make it *Riddick*. *Wheelman* will likely disappoint.

An open-world action-driving hybrid, *Wheelman* falls directly into the path of *GTAIV*, and is subsequently steamrolled by said juggernaut. In the car, it's a competent mix of *Burnout 3: Takedown* and *Stuntman: Ignition*. On foot, it's a (very) basic rendition of *Uncharted* – without all that jumping and climbing malarky. Together, it's all quite workmanlike.

The plot is rushed, packed with far too many characters and more holes than a June bride. You won't know what's going on, and, more to the point, you won't care.

But all isn't lost, we guess.

The thing is, see, *Wheelman* isn't a total write-off. Credit where credit's due, the team do deserve props for setting the game in Europe rather than some carbon copy US city we've torn up previously. Unfortunately, however, *Wheelman*'s Barcelona isn't particularly big. It's not particularly interesting either. It's a bland and lifeless reflection, light years behind a vivid, dynamic metropolis like *GTAIV*'s Liberty City.

We also love the idea of a 'hero car' – this is something movies understand, and games often do not. When *Wheelman* was initially showcased, it appeared Milo's car might have been as much a star of the game as

Vin Diesel himself. This isn't the case. Rather, Barcelona is full of Pontiac G8s, cruising the streets. As a result, there's nothing special about your ride at all – which makes the whole licensing exercise a tad pointless.

Kudos too for the neat special moves, even the ones stolen from elsewhere. Milo has a number of tricks up his sleeve – including the ability to leap from moving car to moving car (like *Pursuit Force*) and shooting special moves reminiscent of the original *True Crime: Streets of LA*. Vehicle melee (flick the right stick in the direction of pursuers to shunt them off the road) is *Wheelman*'s unique addition, and while it's a shade silly (*Burnout* worked without it) it's fun to utilise. Still, they're all underdone and easy to exploit.

No, the biggest problem with *Wheelman* is that it's clearly a game that sounded a lot better over a couple of Newcastle Brown Ales than the finished product actually turned out to be. *Wheelman*, on paper, sounds like a top fun bitty. The reality falls significantly short of the mark. *Wheelman* is certainly functional, but evidence of corner cutting lays everywhere. Wading into battle in a disused subway tunnel we found ourselves under attack from a bloke who looked remarkably similar to another bloke we'd plugged no less than 20 minutes ago (our suspicions of baddie

recycling were confirmed when clones of this cat kept reappearing around every corner, sometimes with a different coloured shirt on, and sometimes in groups of two or three). That was right before we were stalled by an unexpected invisible wall. Tsk, tsk...

Wheelman is as good as it could be, with cash-strapped Midway going under faster than the Lusitania, but it's not good enough to spend a ton on. **Luke Reilly**

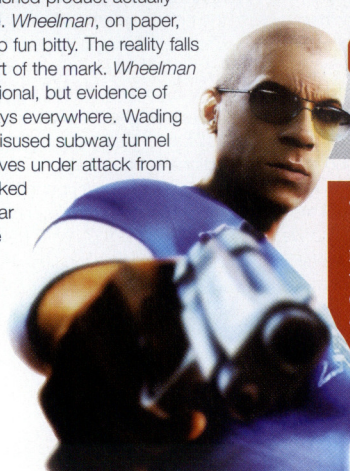
FINAL SAY:

- Vehicle melee - it's dumb, but it works a treat
- Holden die-hards will love the G8
- Far too bland in almost all areas
- Rubbish low-speed handling for a driving game

VERDICT:

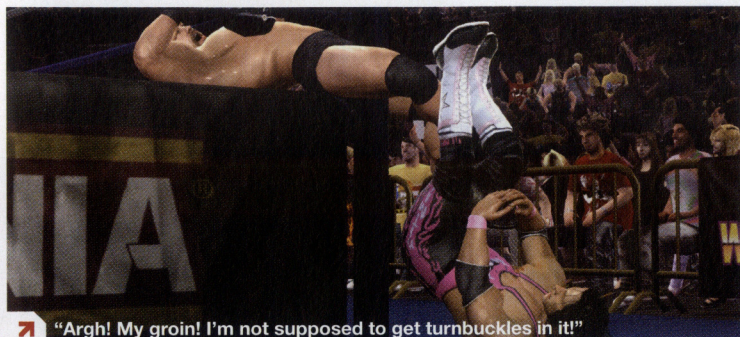
It was a worthwhile dig, but it just isn't a patch on genre leaders.

6



WATCHA GONNA DO?

The game itself unfolds quite differently to the *SDvR* series. The *Wrestlemania* Tour, the main game mode, has three options: Relive (control the winner in a classic *Wrestlemania* stoush), Rewrite (control the loser and change the past) and Redefine (change it up entirely). Interestingly, these matches also challenge you to recreate moves that were actually performed during the real match on which they're based. For example, one of the objectives in the Hulk versus Andre the Giant match is to body slam Andre, just like Hulk managed back in the '80s.



➤ "Argh! My groin! I'm not supposed to get turnbuckles in it!"



➤ Going down...

IN REVIEW

Legend: **Wrestlemania**



WORSE THAN
FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

BETTER THAN
TNA IMPACT!

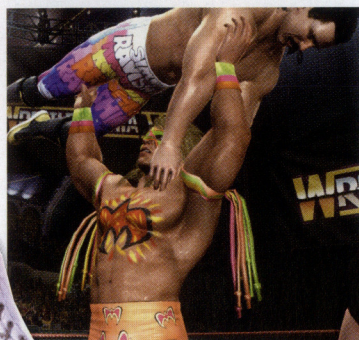
LEGENDS OF WRESTLEMANIA

Lumpy old men



INFO

GENRE: SPORT
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: THQ
DEVELOPER: YUKE'S
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$109.95



What is it with being a wrestler, and dying? Seriously, there are more dead guys in this game than you can poke a toe tag at. Andre the Giant. Big Boss Man. Junkyard Dog. The British Bulldog. Hawk. Big John Studd. Yokozuna. Mr. Perfect. Ravishing Rick Rude. There might be a few more, we can't recall.

And you thought being a crab fisherman was dangerous.

It should be unsurprising, then, that the wrestlers in *WWE Legends of Wrestlemania* move like they're undead – even the ones that haven't made the one-way trip to that big ol' wrestling ring in the sky. But don't write it off just yet.

Legends of Wrestlemania is a celebration of the WWE when it was the WWF; before the World Wildlife Fund decided that, despite the fact there are only a finite amount of letters

(and combinations of said letters) in the alphabet, it didn't want to share its acronym with anyone. At its simplest, it's a stripped-down version of *WWE SmackDown vs Raw 2009*, pruned of almost everything that was bloating the series. It's been streamlined for accessibility, which isn't exactly a bad thing. It reminds us of the really early *SmackDown* games, before they became impossible to play. *Legends of Wrestlemania* requires only the left thumb stick (or the d-pad) and the four face buttons to play. It's unpretentious, and the control scheme suits the kind of game Yuke's was trying to make.

WWE Legends of Wrestlemania does a good job justifying its own existence, well beyond what could've just been a mode in the usual *SDvR* series. The retro presentation goes a long way selling the atmosphere, the packages of real footage that precede the classic matches are surprisingly stirring (even for *WWE* newbies), and the game does well to position itself as a companion to *SDvR 2009* by allowing players to import their created wrestler, and the rest of the roster, for use in *Legends of Wrestlemania*. We'd think even non-wrestling fans, while harbouring no real desire to play the game itself, wouldn't begrudge what's otherwise a good idea. We don't think too many non-footy fans would kick up a fuss if HES cobbled together a 'Legends of League', with classic matches bookended with archival footage. A lot of people tend to forget gaming is a business. A

business in the business of making money.

That said, however, there are a number of widening cracks in whatever engine it is Yuke's is using to power its long line of wrestling titles, and *Legends of Wrestlemania* showcases a whole mess of them. Some of the camera angles during entrances reveal some truly dire crowd members, the wrestlers themselves aren't really a patch on Yuke's own *UFC 2009* (due out shortly) and some of the clipping on show is truly tragic. Marvel as the top rope passes directly through the spleen of Andre the Giant! And such.

It's stodgy, clunky, 19 classic matches probably isn't enough and it only really stands up as a multiplayer game, but it does what it does with the tools at its disposal – and it's made a decent fist of it.

👤 Luke Reilly

FINAL SAY:

😊 • Far less difficult than THQ's other grapplers
• Old-school presentation goes a long way

😞 • Feels very, very old
• Steep price for a re-skin with a bunch of videos inserted

VERDICT:

Feels positively ancient, gets by on retro charm.

6

➤ How many...



DISGAEA 3: ABSENCE OF JUSTICE

Descend into an underworld of addiction

He might be a heavy knight, but he's a lovely chap

Basic Stats		Aptitude		Heavy Knight	
HP	32	HP	120%	Minimum Mana	1
SP	8	SP	80%		
ATK	14	ATK	110%		
DEF	18	DEF	130%		
INT	6	INT	70%		
RES	14	RES	110%		
HIT	12	HIT	100%		
SPD	6	SPD	70%		

25%
-25%
25%

3 15 1 6 2 5%

A knight who boasts a solid defense.
Has the highest defense of all jobs.
Weapon Forte: Spear, Axe

Mana: 1250

Select the character's job (species).



Your eyes do not deceive you — these are decidedly last-gen graphics.

Visually, there's nothing in this game that couldn't be achieved on a PS2. Or a PSone, for that matter. But you don't play a tactical RPG for the graphics any more than you watch *Aerobics Oz Style* for the personal training. The distinct Disgaea look is a means to an end, a succinct method of cramming all the relevant data from a staggeringly complex turn-based strategy game onto the screen.

Play for any amount of time, and you'll turn off the animations, the better to mainline on wonk. *Disgaea 3* takes around 100 hours to play through, and a similar amount of time to figure out what's going on.

Certainly, things start to get interesting, and addictive, once you start your way up the learning curve. But an equipment statistic system where characters actually get a bonus to shoot with firearms when they're wearing eyeglasses is just the start.

Certain 'monster class' characters can be temporarily transformed into weapons for other characters to deal out higher damage with. Some levels mix the flat plane of tactical combat with three-dimensional exploding-block puzzles. You can even stack units on top of each other to make 'towers', temporary constructions that magnify combat power and range.

This is not a casual RPG, nor is it a

casual strategy game. This is even more of a hard-core experience than *Valkyria Chronicles* — the sort of pastime supercomputers must turn to when they tire of chess.

The plot plunges you into a realm of inverted morals: the Netherworld. At a Hogwarts-esque school for demons, the very best students are habitual truants, while those who bother to show up for class are considered delinquent. As rebellious demonic students start flaunting authority by doing good deeds, and the protagonist seeks to depose his overlord father by becoming a hero, the plot delves into wry complexities reminiscent of that old ABC cartoon, *The Baskervilles*. The cutesy demon girls and succubus teachers, of course, are all part of an elaborate social proxy — the only way to free up time for a *Disgaea* game is to sacrifice the life beyond the walls of your games room.

The anime aesthetic they've gone for is an excessively sterile one, and two or three layers removed from reality. Maybe in the '70s there were manga artists who had seen women with their own eyes, but it seems the Japanese illustrators of today only have other mangas for reference. *Disgaea* is aimed squarely at those who lead a rich fantasy life, and fair enough — but these figures are excessively rubbery, and the midi circus tunes they animate to do not possess universal appeal.

That's not to say that only losers will be drawn to *Disgaea*'s staggeringly deep tactical combat system. Far from it. Anyone who finds themselves confined for extended periods, such as prisoners, the bedridden, or submariners, will revel in this drawn-out cerebral challenge.

James Cottee

WORSE THAN
PIXELJUNK MONSTERS

BETTER THAN
ENDWAR


FINAL SAY:

- Classic Disgaea strategy
- 100+ hours of play
- Primitive graphics
- Anime designs look a little off

VERDICT:

Aesthetics aside, this a feast for SRPG wonks.

8

"Permission to not play this game any more, sir." 

Stormrise




INFO

GENRE: RTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SEGA
DEVELOPER: THE CREATIVE ASSEMBLY
PLAYERS: 1, MULTIPLAYER
PRICE: \$99.95


WORSE THAN
CIVILIZATION

BETTER THAN
NOT MUCH



 Children's roundabouts in the future are particularly brutal



 "That's it, I'm outta here"

SAI? [SIGH]

Your enemies are ill-defined and not terribly scary in *Stormrise*. The Sai somehow have adapted to whatever the hell happened to Earth and this seems to turn them into crab people. Even that sounds far more interesting than it is.

STORMRISE

Okay, you move over there... no, there, ARGH!

Once upon a time, many years ago, the idea of a decent console shooter was laughable. Now we have *Killzone 2* – a title that could stand up to almost any PC shooter and come out victorious.

The same, unfortunately, cannot be said for real-time strategy (RTS) titles.

Stormrise should have been the game that changed all that. Cobbled together by The Creative Assembly Australia we really, honestly wanted this to be good.

So, it's not then? No, it's not. But you can see glimpses of genius every now and then. Creative Assembly are the lads and lassies who release the *Total War* series on PC. Having seen the latest one, even an ardent console junkie has to say, "Wow."

If only we'd been saying it about *Stormrise*. Okay, so what's wrong with it? For a start the title sucks. *Stormrise* sounds like the name emblazoned on the covers of brick-thick paperbacks you can buy at the airport.

The next problem is the game's story. It's set in a post-apocalyptic future where firestorms from a very ill-defined nemesis have reduced most of Earth to crispy critters. Happily you're a space marine, or

something, that controls a mech so you were deemed useful enough to keep in a apocalypse-proof bunker.

Huh? Exactly, and just when you think you've got a handle on things weird crab monsters, a witchy Goth chick who can shoot lasers and wee critters that feed, underground, on rotting corpses have popped up. They also have a more traditional army. These are the Sai. You can tell they're bad because they're red.

You can kind of see where Creative Assembly wanted to take the game but they bugger it up in a number of ways.


First, they give the game a central character. And a mate. If either of these mech-suited chaps die in battle it's game over. Um, why? You're sending troops to take out other troops, you're spawning turrets, shields and the like – and blind Freddy cops a unwanted bullet to the scone and everyone gives up? No, for an RTS to work you need to be a god-like figure. Or even just giving orders from orbit. And why are you in a mech suit anyway?

It gets worse. The controls are, we kid you not, *amazingly* crap. Crap upon crap painted a haunting shade of crap. You choose a gaggle of grunts with your 'whip

it' cursor with right stick and send them into the fray with left stick. The problem, in the game's first few levels at least, is that after this mawkish command is executed by the time you send the second, third and fourth unit's – the first one's been wiped out.

For all its pomp and noise the game handles like a ferret trying to bite you on the ballbag: you're always, desperately, trying to make it go the way it's almost obstinately not.

The graphics are adequate, but cheap. The PSN title *Savage Moon* on a bigger scope would have kicked this frustrating, inconsistent mess all over the shop. Seriously guys, points for trying but you should have looked at *Civilization* for a workable console control scheme, and not just plonk down an intelligence insulting plot straight out of bad fan-fiction.

With *Total War* you, the player, make the story happen. What if Napoleon hadn't met his Waterloo? What if the indigenous population of America beat the pilgrims back? That's *interesting*. Or at least more interesting, and consistent, than this cack-handed, future war/sci-fi/strategy mess. Diabolically bad.  **Anthony O'Connor**

FINAL SAY:



- Erm, it's a different kind of game...
- ... that RTS fans might be able to glean some joy from

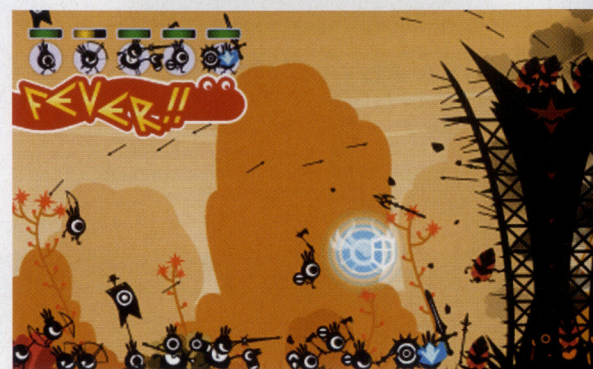


- A plot so rife with cliché it's actually clichéd to call it a cliché
- Controls so counter intuitive it's like the game's playing hard to get

VERDICT:

The Creative Assembly, PLEASE, make another console RTS and correct these mistakes, 'cos this isn't fun.

4



PATAPON 2

The beats of war

Patapon 2 could've been the perfect example of DLC done right. Sure, there's a '2' in the title, and it is, technically, a sequel, but in the world of PC games this sort of product is referred to as a 'mission pack'. Don't get us wrong — mission packs are awesome. At their best, add-ons like *Supreme Commander: Forged Alliance* can take a great game and make it even better; an effect similar to cramming 20 pounds of awesome into a 10-pound bag. They're good value, too — because they go for around half the price of a new release.

Why the fuss? Well, in *Patapon 2* there are new monsters, new levels, a whole new campaign game, novelty multi-player modes, a refined upgrade tree, and some bizarre new units, like bird riders and egg robots. But the animations, hub screens, basic play style, and a good deal of the music are the same. It doesn't feel so much a sequel, as though the first game simply kept on going — the opportunity to import your old save data reinforces this impression.

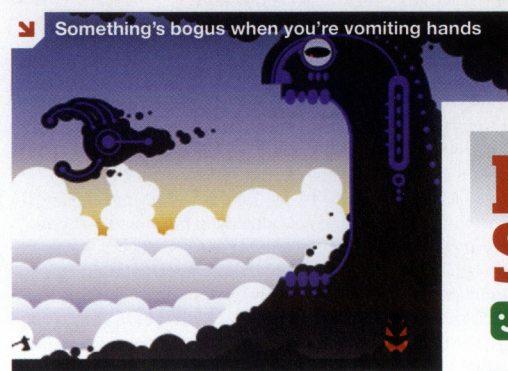
Lucky for us, then, that the first game was so brilliant. For those who came in late, *Patapon* was and is a real-time strategy brainbender disguised as a rhythm/action game. To keep your

primitive little eyeball warriors fighting at peak capacity, you have to keep the beat on the face buttons. Each bar lets you enter a different, discrete order. With square as Patta, and circle as Pon, you might start your army marching with a regular beat of "Patta Patta Patta Pon." But once an enemy is sighted, you'll want to change the rhythm to "Pon Pon Patta Pon," to order an attack. Copping too much damage? Start using the triangle as well, and "Hatta Hatta Patta Pon" will make them take cover under their shields, Spartan-style.

These commands, and many more, are gradually introduced. Together with the staggering complexity of the equipment and unit upgrades, along with the obtuse geometry of the campaign map, it soon becomes clear that this is a game for adults masquerading as kiddie fare.

Keeping your Patapons alive in battle is harrowing, but rewarding. For as you advance to the right, it seems that every cranny and nook of this world holds new upgrades, new wonders, and new little friends. If anything, *Patapon* is more adorable than ever.

There is one big caveat: the number of characters you can use in your name is limited. At four letters, this is even worse than *Tom Clancy's HAWX*. There's enough for Kami, Zeus, or Odin, but if you want to be Jupiter, Wotan, or Yahweh, then you're shit out of luck. This same restriction applies to your new customisable hero character. Yes, yes, it's so all the on-screen voice-balloons can be consistently sized as



FINAL SAY:

• Addictive rhythm action play
• Fabulous sound and vision

• Just a tad too hard
• Four-letter name limit!

VERDICT:

A worthy sequel to a true PSP classic.

9



INFO

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: RTS
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: SONY
PLAYERS: 1-4
PRICE: \$49.95

HMM, THAT VOICE IS KINDA FAMILIAR...

If young Claude C. Kenny's voice is giving you the déjà vu, it may be because you recognise it as that of Shinji Ikari, from the classic anime series *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, who was also voiced by Spike Spencer.

Maybe it's just us, but Claude looks a lot like Macaulay Culkin



IN REVIEW

Star Ocean: Second Evolution

“Yeah, I had a friend who got nailed because there was a rumour he wore dinosaur pyjamas”

CELINE
You two have been a lot of help to me, so let me thank you both.



Home Alone 5: Too Old For This



“A kid coming into a hotel, making a reservation? I don't think so”



INFO

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: RPG
RELEASE: OUT NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: TRI-ACE
PLAYERS: 1
PRICE: \$69.95



STAR OCEAN: SECOND EVOLUTION

Space is big...

Start date 2009... bugger, we did it again. Damn! Okay, *Spacedate* 2009: Following hotter on the heels of the first PSP instalment of *Star Ocean* than a crispy fried Vulcan comes Squenix's remix of PSone RPG fave *The Second Story*, retitled a little as *Second Evolution*.

So what's with the *Star Trek* references? Well, to its credit, developer tri-Ace has been quite upfront with its reverence for Mr Roddenberry's spacey tales ever since the first episode of the *Star Ocean* franchise hit the Super Nintendo more years ago than we'd care to remember. Mind you, on first experiencing *Second Evolution* you'd be forgiven for wondering just where such influence came in.

We set off in a rather verdant, obviously primitive village named Arlia. We're introduced to our two lead characters, the mysteriously-garbed traveller Claude C. Kenny and funky blue-haired village person Rena Lanford. It

turns out that young Kenny is a Federation officer, just like his dear papa from the first instalment. Things are a touch simpler on the planet where he's been accidentally transported, however, so this bearer of weaponry glowy is mistaken as a hero foretold in local prophecy. Claude and Rena pair up to investigate the peculiar meteorite dubbed the 'Sorcery Globe' which is causing all manner of disastersque mayhem, fights ensue, days are saved, etc.

We're talking classic RPG here. Angles may vary in isometricness at times, but the central play will be manna to old hands at the genre. You trundle about ransacking chests, chatting to locals and gradually inch your way towards saving the world and killing the baddies, who launch at you in real time, requiring a certain amount of keeping upon toes.

Second Evolution isn't for the impatient, however, for there's more unskippable dialogue than you could

shake a deranged Ferengi at. Sure, this is fine if it's important, but the propensity for the locals to waffle here is bordering upon legendary. They make cricket commentators seem sparing in the verbiage, which is frightening. Still, they don't try to flog us crap memorabilia, so we know who we'd rather hang with.

Those who do persevere will be rewarded with an engrossing experience. If you snapped up the PSP incarnation of *First Departure* you'll be able to hit the ground running, for many of the control mechanisms are near-as, if not, identical. The battle system in particular may not be as high-tech as more modern RPGs, but there's depth in the item creation and private action elements that rewards those who explore them. Plus there's replay value a-go-go by playing as either Mr Kenny or Rena.

If you're into old-school RPGs, then *Star Ocean: Second Evolution*'s dose of sci-fi fantasy is good enough to bring a smile to a Klingon's face. **Amy Flower**

WORSE THAN
TALES OF ETERNIA

BETTER THAN
STAR OCEAN:
FIRST DEPARTURE

FINAL SAY:

- Classic console RPG fare
- Gorgeous anime cutscenes
- Too much unskippable blahblahblah
- Combat can be a trifle yawn-inducing

VERDICT:

Hija' lo'laHghach (uh, "good value!", we think)

7

IN REVIEW

Resistance: Retribution

PlayStation
Official Magazine - Australia
**BRONZE
AWARD**

PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE

Got *Resistance 2* on PS3? Connect the two via USB to unlock extras, including infecting Grayson with the Chimera virus, extra weaponry, and the option to play the game with your SIXAXIS controller.



INFO

FORMAT: PSP
GENRE: 3RD PERSON ACTION
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: SONY
DEVELOPER: SONY BEND
PLAYERS: 1-8
PRICE: \$59.95

RESISTANCE: RETRIBUTION

Karma-karma-karma-Chimera

Retribution is defined in a couple of ways. Firstly, as paying a penalty for a wrongdoing. Fair enough, as lead-man James Grayson, ex-British Marine, is sentenced to death for deserting his squad – though given a reprieve for becoming a mercenary in the French Maquis. Secondly, it can be defined as an act or thing given when paying said penalty – plain old payback. Revenge. Even more apt, as Grayson is a man whose purpose in life is to rid the world of the Chimera forces who killed his brother. The timeline in *Retribution* runs in parallel to the *Resistances* on PS3, though forget about Nathan Hale: this is Grayson's story. Newcomers to the series may be a little baffled as to who or what the Chimera are, as the background story isn't explored to the depth of the PS3 versions. It's a minor

hurdle to overcome and doesn't really affect the game as a whole.

Ditching the series' traditional first-person view was the right move both technically and for the sake of immersion. Cut-scenes aren't uncommon, so swapping from a first-person view to floating outside of the body you're occupying too often would spoil the illusion. Grayson and his supporting cast are well animated, however Hybrids have a chronic case of lockjaw, as their mouths are constantly open. The palette of colours in the environment is unlike the PS3 games, being fairly soft but packed with detail and it's definitely impressive. Charging up a whole clip with one of the weapons, the Razor, produces a glow at the end of the barrel that reflects on surfaces. Sunlight bleeds through

destroyed buildings and imitates a bloom effect. The frame-rate is constant.

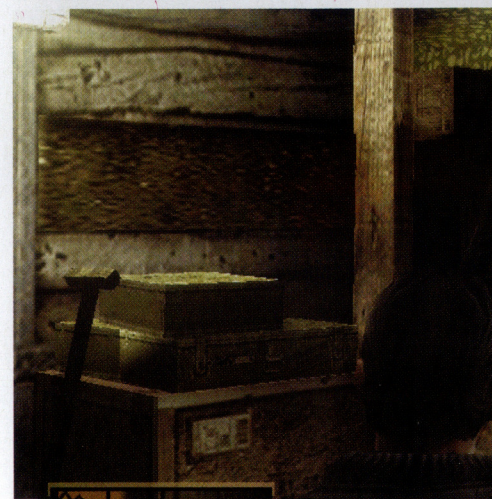
Fleshing out the roster are new enemies, Boilers, which are suicide bombers. Emptying a clip into their torso will do squat as the only way of taking them out is with a headshot. Allow them to get too close and they explode, eradicating a chunk of your health. They're one of the quickest ground-based opponents and training your gun sights on them for the headshot is tricky. Enemies are automatically locked on – just keep them within the inner rectangle on screen and a cross-hair will choose the nearest and most deadly threat. Changing to manual aiming is toggled by \uparrow on the d-pad, aiming and looking around is via the face buttons, while the analog stick strafes and moves Grayson forwards and backward. Getting used to traditional shooter/third-person controls with the stick/button combo is peculiar at first though becomes second nature once you're halfway through the first level. We recommend increasing the turning speed and acceleration to match the sudden on/off characteristic of the face buttons because making quick headshots takes some practice. Though the speed Grayson looks around can be changed, the man himself moves about 10 percent slower than you think he should, and there's no sprint button. After a few levels though you'll realise that this isn't so much of a problem as the levels are



That guy has some fiery halitosis



"Hula Hoop goes around your waist. Around!"



"Stop, or I'll...oh"



WORSE THAN
RESISTANCE 2

BETTER THAN
KILLZONE LIBERATION

well balanced and flow just right, with definite patterns of light and shade. It isn't action all the time, the puzzle elements are minimal and it's totally linear without holding your hand and patronisingly showing you where to go.


At times it feels like enemies are rooted to the spot, but the difficulty increases fairly rapidly; you'll be shot down as faster moving enemies will be all over your hiding spot. The different Chimera are neither intelligent nor dumb, just outmatched for the type of weapon you might have equipped. In this case *Retribution* feels like a game of Paper Scissors Rock. It could be the weapon you're using or the cover you're behind that's the reason you're sent back and back again to the nearest checkpoint, so if an enemy's beating you down change your tactic.


You're never outgunned or unfairly outmatched, just

outsmarted by the game design rather than the bad guys being unbalanced. Checkpoints are logically placed while health packs and bullets abound – it's rare that you're scratching around for ammo however this glut of munitions doesn't lessen the overall feeling of tension or feel like you're being spoon-fed. There's a fine orchestral score with stabs of strings to jack up your heart rate – slip on some decent headphones and immerse yourself. The one area of sound design that is a letdown however is Grayson's voice – straight out of a Guy Ritchie movie with chirlish one-liners. The majority of the blame falls on the script and it's a blemish on an otherwise polished product.

Ultimately we have a fine action game. *Resistance* fans will find a different game to their usual fare but one that fits in to the universe well, while newcomers will have a great PSP title to kick things off. **Paul Taylor**

FINAL SAY:

 • Amazing graphics
• Well paced with loads to unlock

 • Slightly sticky controls
• Grayson loves dropping the f-bomb

VERDICT:

Well built with minor flaws, this is definitely one to get hold of.

8

All PS3 PS2 Xbox 360 PSP Wii DS PC

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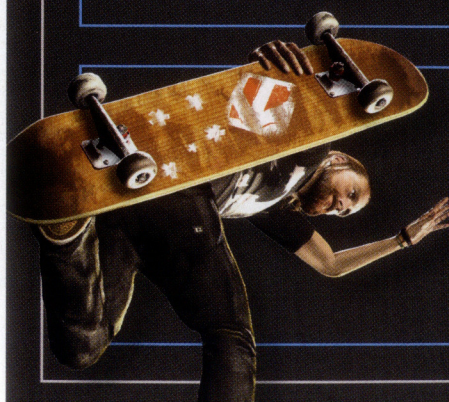
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cheats

reviews

previews

and more!



INTERMISSION

On the box

ALSO IN CINEMAS...

Fast and Furious (TBC)

Director: Justin Lin
Cast: Vin Diesel, Paul Walker

Bucking the trend of adding a suffix or prefix, the title's been streamlined and thus returns to its roots, reuniting odd couple Diesel and Walker. Expect the next sequel to be 'The Fast and The Furious: Signed, Sealed and Cylindere'd'. We suspect.

Defiance (M)

Director: Edward Zwick
Cast: Daniel Craig, Liev Schreiber, Jamie Bell

Set in WWII, three brothers escape the clutches of the Nazis and set about saving thousands of other Jews. Based on a true story, chances are you could find out exactly what happens in a history book. But that's not the point, is it?

Monsters Vs Aliens (PG)

Director: Rob Letterman, Conrad Vernon
Cast: Reese Witherspoon, Hugh Laurie, Seth Rogen

Animated movie where giant things beat up each other giant things. Kind of like *The Biggest Loser*, then.

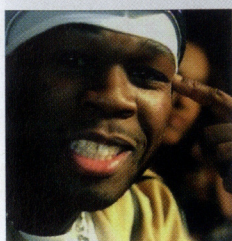


CINEMAS | **DIRECTOR:** GAVIN HOOD | **CAST:** HUGH JACKMAN, LIEV SCHREIBER, LYNN COLLINS | **IN CINEMAS:** APRIL 29

X-MEN ORIGINS: WOLVERINE (TBC)

'Rebooting' a series is a trendy and bankable move by studios lately. Fans of a film franchise or its source material, e.g. a comic, who have grown up with their favourite characters are treated as their heroes are – hopefully – given some respect on screen, while the rest of the cinema-going population witness a 'grown-up' interpretation of something that's, often unfairly, treated as being for kids or adults who haven't moved on from their childhood. The latest in the X-Men franchise, *Wolverine* is a prequel, the first in a planned line of origin stories that'll delve more in to the 'how' of the

X-Men universe and it's shaping up to be a cracker. Hugh Jackman keeps the chops for the titular role, aptly portraying a character who has the right mix of aggression and tragedy in his past, but who still possesses a set of morals many people identify and can sympathise with. Writer David Benioff drew influence from Frank "Sin City" Miller's Wolverine comics from 1982 and another side-story, Weapon X, to make this dark and expansive iteration that explores not just the character of Wolverine but also the other superheroes and villains who shape the X-Men universe.



THE BUZZ

What's really going on behind-the-scenes

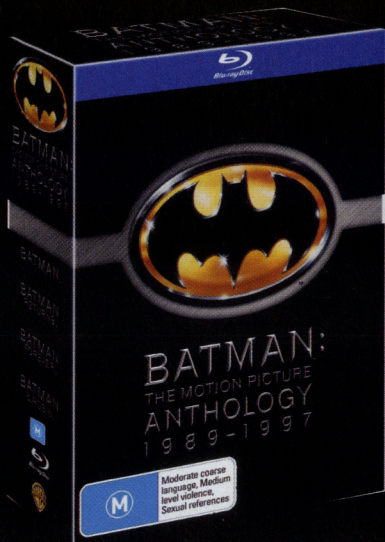
Rapper Curtis "50 Cent" Jackson is licking his quill to write a screenplay on the *Saint's Row* games. Revealing his plans when discussing the release of his game *Blood On The Sand*, (which we gave a 7 in last month's issue, by

the way) Fiddy said he would "develop *Saint's Row* into an actual screenplay and into a film project. I'm optioning the rights for that right now, so [THQ, publishers of *Blood On The Sand* and *Saint's Row*] will see that before

they see me do it from my own perspective for my game." No word yet on whether Fiddy will star or just write at the moment. This could be truly, truly terrible. Like, stupendously bad.

BLU-RAY DIRECTORS: TIM BURTON, JOEL SCHUMACHER | CAST: MICHAEL KEATON, VAL KILMER, GEORGE CLOONEY, CHRIS O'DONNELL, CHRISTOPHER WALKEN

BATMAN: THE MOTION PICTURE ANTHOLOGY 1989-1997 (M)



The '90s gave us a lot, and the 'original' Batman quadrilogy was one of them (1989 is close enough). It was the first time the caped crusader had hit the big screen since Adam West donned tights, and it was a phenomenon – a crime-fighting cash cow for Warner Bros.

In fact, we'd be especially surprised if you grew up in the '90s and *didn't* see these films. As kids, we remember the marketing machine behind these bad boys was only marginally less insane than the first *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle* movie. Still, a quick recap.

The original *Batman*, directed by Tim Burton and featuring Michael Keaton in the title role, helped define the modern superhero film. Batman takes on Jack Nicholson as The Joker, foiling his plan to wipe out the population of Gotham. Keaton and Burton returned in *Batman Returns*,

which introduced us to The Penguin (Danny DeVito) and Catwoman.

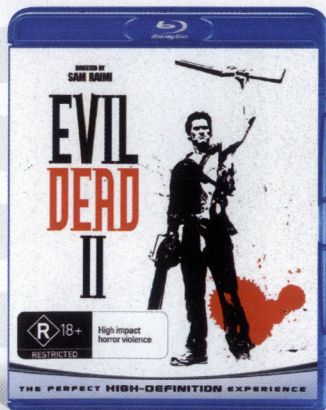
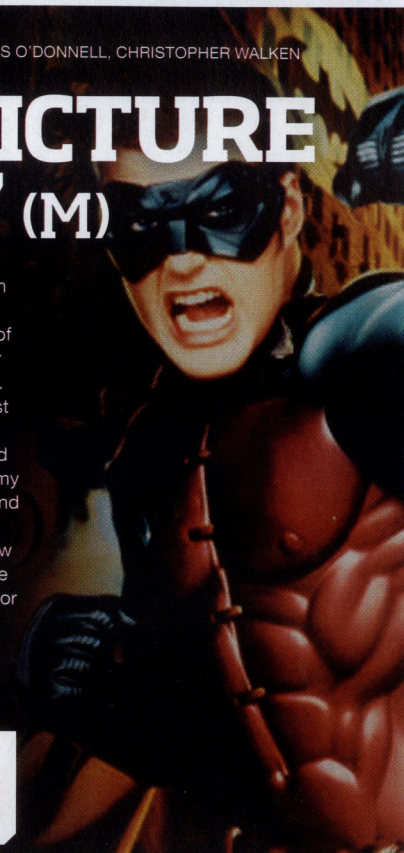
Batman Forever was a change of pace, directed by Joel Schumacher and featuring Val Kilmer as Batman. It wasn't as well-received as the first two instalments, but it just held it together. The Riddler, well-portrayed by Jim Carrey, and Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones) featured as the crims, and Robin became Batman's sidekick.

Batman and Robin was the straw that broke the camel's back. George Clooney has publically apologised for this movie. It was a 90-minute gay joke on ice, with rubber nipples.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
Solid '90s fare, although take a few points off for *Batman and Robin*, of course

8



EVIL DEAD II (R18+)

Director: Sam Raimi

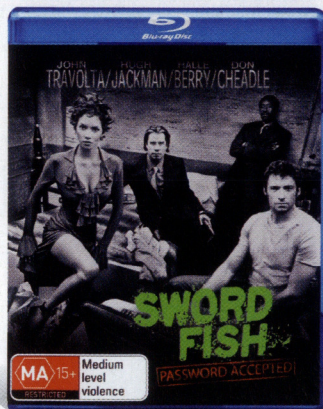
Cast: Bruce Campbell, Dan Hicks, Kassie Wesley, Richard Domeier, Sarah Berry

When Ash (Bruce 'If Chins Could Kill' Campbell) accidentally plays an ancient incantation on a tape recorder in an isolated cabin, an evil force is awakened, forcing Ash to do battle with the undead.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
One of the most influential and best cult films ever!

8



SWORDFISH (MA15+)

Director: Dominic Sena

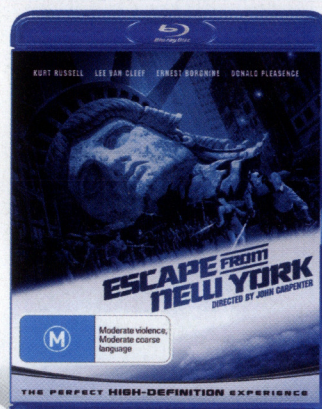
Cast: John Travolta, Hugh Jackman, Halle Berry, Don Cheadle, Sam Shepard, Vinnie Jones

When a covert counter-terrorist unit called Black Cell wants to steal \$9.5 billion to finance their raise-the-stakes vengeance war against international terrorism, they bring in hacker Stanley Jobson to slice into the government mainframes and get the money.

EXTRAS: 6

VERDICT:
Halle Berry's boobs aren't really all that

7



ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK (M)

Director: John Carpenter

Cast: Kurt Russell, Adrienne Barbeau, Donald Pleasence, Ernest Borgnine

In 1997, New York is a maximum security prison. When the President's plane goes down in Manhattan, Snake Plissken is offered his freedom if he goes in and rescues him.

EXTRAS: 7

VERDICT:
Near enough the greatest B-movie ever

9



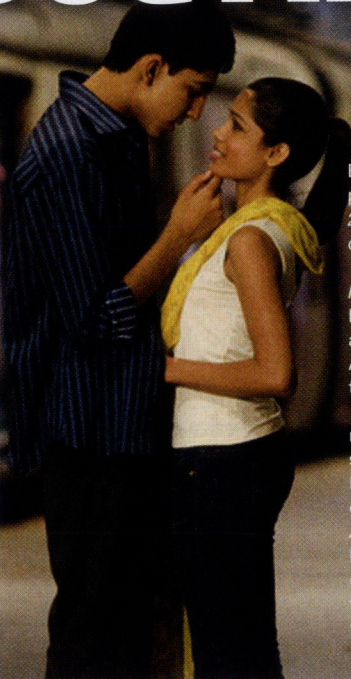
IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY... THE DARK KNIGHT
This is how you make a Batman movie.

On the box...

DVD DIRECTOR: DANNY BOYLE | CAST: DEV PATEL, FREIDA PINTO, MADHUR MITTAL

SLUMDOG MILLIONAIRE

(MA15+)



British director Danny Boyle, whose previous work includes *Trainspotting*, *28 Days Later*, *Sunshine* and a few other flicks, struck paydirt with this.

Made for \$15 million, *Slumdog Millionaire* was a surprise hit at the box office, taking in US\$200 million and winning eight of the 10 Academy Awards it was nominated for earlier this year. And it deserves it, too.

Starring a bunch of no-name nobodies who will definitely become somebodies, 18-year-old Jamal Malik, from the slums of Mumbai, goes on India's *Who Wants To Be A Millionaire?* and manages to fluke his way through to the penultimate question. Each question and answer flashes back to a point in his life, weaving his time on the show in to

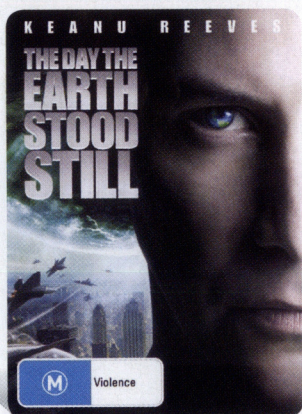
what happened up to that point in the story. But is he a cheat, incredibly lucky or bound by fate?

You're right to cock your eyebrow, but this is excellent. Fans of Boyle's previous work will spot common elements from his previous flicks, both in the way the film's shot and the storyline. It's a grand tale that's paced well and with great performances; this indie hit is a modern classic. We dare you not to sing along with the song just before the credits.

EXTRAS: 7

VERDICT:
Pure at heart and a cracking story. A must-see

9



THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL (M)

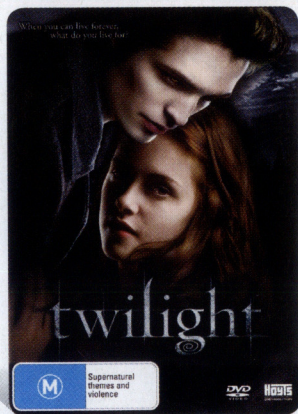
Director: Scott Derrickson
Cast: Keanu Reeves, Jennifer Connelly, John Cleese

A remake of the 1951 classic sci-fi film about an alien and his giant robot counterpart who visit Earth.

EXTRAS: 5

VERDICT:
Nice effects, but it's all a little musty

5



TWILIGHT (MA15+)

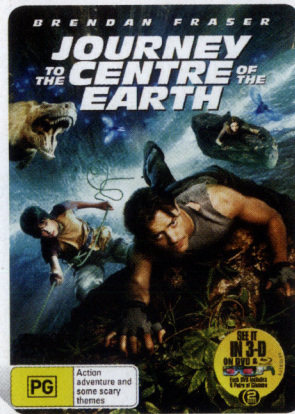
Director: Catherine Hardwicke
Cast: Kristen Stewart, Robert Pattinson, Billy Burke, Peter Facinelli, Elizabeth Reaser, Cam Gigandet, Nikki Reed

Flavour-of-the-month vampire love story gets turned into flavour-of-the-month vampire love story movie. Kind vampire falls in love with non-vampire girl, problems ensue.

EXTRAS: 4

VERDICT:
We really don't get what the big deal is, seriously

5



JOURNEY TO THE CENTRE OF THE EARTH (PG)

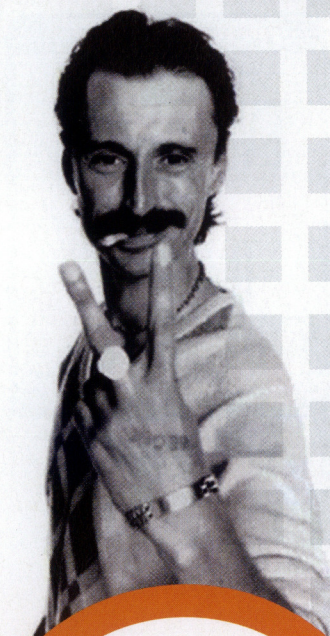
Director: Eric Brevig
Cast: Brendan Fraser, Josh Hutcherson, Anita Briem, Seth Meyers

Based on the classic Jules Verne novel about a thrilling journey deep beneath the Earth's surface.

EXTRAS: 4

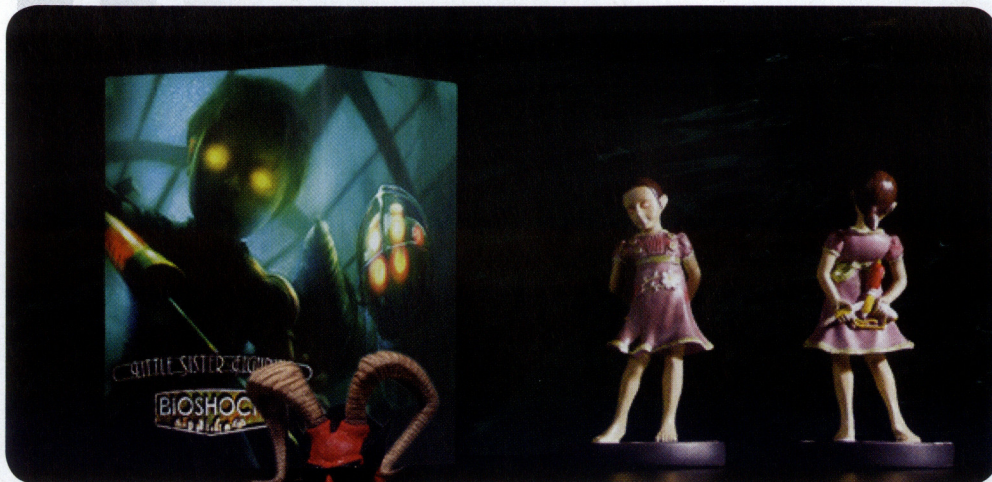
VERDICT:
Decent adventure fare for the family

6



IF YOU LIKE THIS TRY...

Trainspotting
Danny Boyle's original breakthrough hit!



LITTLE SISTER FIGURINE

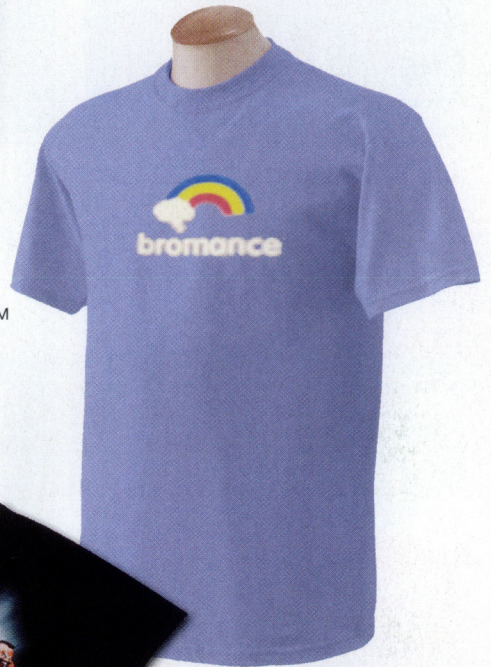
PRICE: US\$10 | GET IT: TAKE2STORE.STORES.YAHOO.NET

If you were one of the lucky saps who pre-ordered *BioShock* and got your exclusive Big Daddy figure, you should check this out. The ultimate partner for your Big Daddy is one of these Little Sister figurines. Cast in ceramic, hand-painted and about 8cm tall she's designed to-scale with the Big Daddy figurine. This figurine is a one-time production run and is available for purchase only through this store.

STREET FIGHTER IV TEE

PRICE: US\$24 | GET IT: WWW.80STEES.COM

What better way to proudly display your love for all things *Street Fighter* than this T-shirt? If you're going to Dragon Punch a stranger in the street, make sure you're wearing this bad boy!



BROMANCE TEE

PRICE: \$20 | GET IT: WWW.EDESIGN101.COM.AU

Likewise, what better way to display your platonic love for your life-long mates than this T-shirt? Bros before hos men. Bromance: it's code you call getting trolleyed and hugging blokes.

GUITAR HERO 2009 SERIES 01

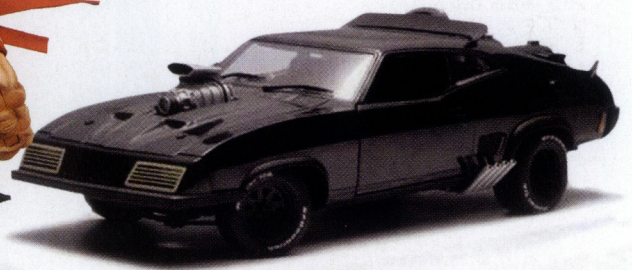
PRICE: US\$12 | GET IT: WWW.BIGBADTOYSTORE.COM

Guitar Hero has just about done its dash with us, going from underground phenomenon to well-and-truly-milked in less time than it took Elvis to croak. These ARE kinda neat though. All the *Guitar Hero III* crowd is here including Judy Nails, Slash, Lou, and Izzy Sparks. Casey Lynch and Eddie Knox are apparently on the way next.

STREET FIGHTER IV FIGURES ROUND 1

PRICE: US\$45 | GET IT: WWW.BIGBADTOYSTORE.COM

C. Viper, Ken and Ryu from *Street Fighter IV* make their fully-articulated debut with these cool NECA action figures. Poseable, and with bonus appendages for convincing hadoukens, these are a must for any *Street Fighter IV* tragics.



1:18 MAD MAX II V8 INTERCEPTOR

PRICE: \$170.95 | GET IT: WWW.KOLLECTABLEKAOS.COM.AU

The game might be two years away, but you might as well get in early. The last of the V8 Interceptors, this XB Falcon coupe is the ultimate in V8 Supercars. This bitch is born to run.

INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...

LATEST

Download this...

InFamous video



Watching Cole get hands-on with the city and surrounds makes us even more excited by this 'electrifying' game.

Midnight Club LA: South Central DLC



The free map update generously increases the play area by a third, and the premium upgrade slings in lowriders, baby.

Wheelman demo



Make your own mind up: take the bald guy and his gravelly voice for a fast and furious lap around Barcelona.

Valkyria Chronicles DLC



Three new packs for this under-appreciated PS3 RPG, including an extra-hard mode, a mission for Edy and one based around Selvaria's troops.

Prince of Persia Epilogue DLC

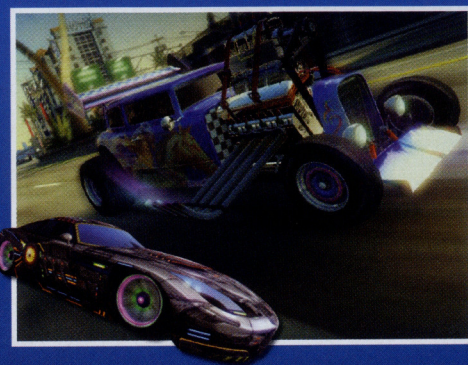


Die-hard Prince fans will appreciate this extra chunk in the storyline. Just make sure you've finished the main game first, okay?

NEWS

BURNOUT PARADISE

More cars!

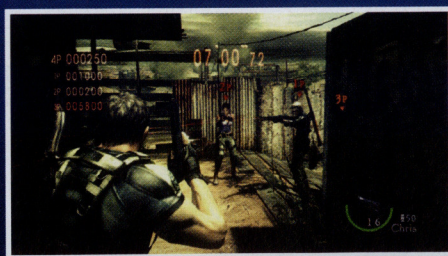


We're not sure what's going to arrive next in Paradise City, or if there'll be another *Burnout* game after the amount of DLC thrust upon players; bikes, challenges, classic film-inspired motors and now two new cars to tear up the streets with more to come. Considering the total cost of all the DLC you may end up splurging on *Paradise*, it'll probably work out to be the same as buying a brand new game. Still, the boost-adaptive Hawker Mech and more-pipes-than-a-church-organ Carson Extreme Hot Rod are the latest mean machines to hit the streets and they're both pretty wild. If you're looking for something to hook you back in to *Burnout* and don't mind paying for the privilege, these two are yours for a snip under \$13.

RESIDENT EVIL 5

Hunter becomes the hunted, before hunting again

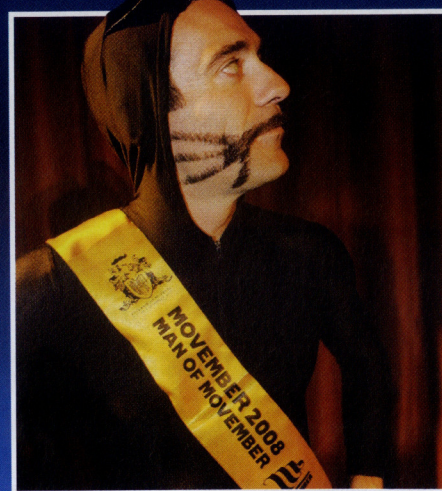
The *Resident* series has relied upon spin-offs in the past from the main story for multiplayer action, such as the PS2 title *Outbreak*. Well, spin-off no more! Capcom have announced a 'Versus' mode in stark contrast to the co-op built in to *RE 5*, and it should be available by the time you're reading this. Typical multiplayer fare such as deathmatch (one on one) and team deathmatch (two vs two), as well as a points-based game in wiping out Majinis, make up the package. Whilst we don't have a price at time of going to print, we expect this to be around the \$7 mark.



SAINTS ROW 2

Mustache gracias

Every year, November becomes Movember, and the aim is to either develop a sporting crop of face fuzz or, ladies, support a gent in this pursuit, thus raising cash for men's health issues. Last year's winners had their super stylin' follicles recreated in game for you to enjoy. What an age we live in. Check out Mr. Perth's efforts at the plastic surgeon.





ONLINE REVIEWS

FLOCK!

Totally sheep-shape

Despite the unassuming title, *Flock!* has the potential to be this year's best puzzle game. The premise is simple. Taking control of a UFO it's your job to herd sheep, cows, pigs and chickens – each with their own characteristics – onto your mothership, using the presence of your tractor beam to (gently) scare the animals in the right direction. Levels are short and tight but often tricky, especially when you're trying to coax a stubborn and stupid sheep or an over-excited chicken to where you want it to go. It sometimes feels like you're trying to neatly blow confetti with a pedestal fan along a ruler.

Everything about this is paired back but not lacking or undercooked, incorporating elements of the Gamecube's *Pikmin*, the classic *Lemmings* and *Mercury Meltdown*. Bold, bright graphics and animation create instant appeal whilst effects and music add to the charm. *Flock!* is perfect for either a quick blast or losing yourself for an hour-long session, and a lazy afternoon is enough time to knock this over in single player. The local co-op mode, with unique stages so you're not treading over familiar ground, is a highlight. Ewe'll dig it.

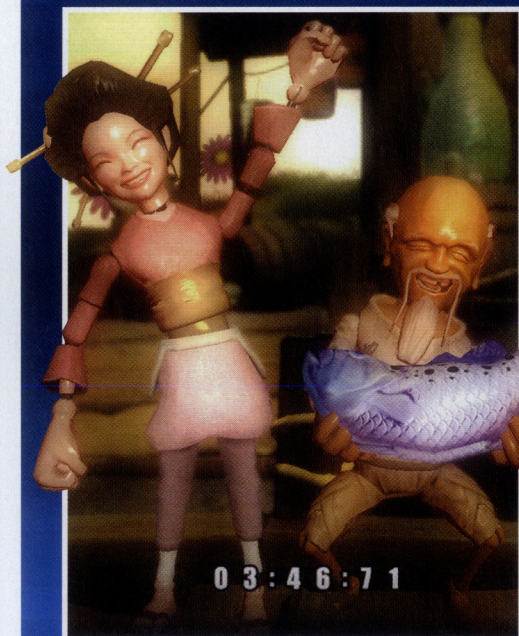


VERDICT:
A charming and balanced puzzler.

8

RAG DOLL KUNG FU: FISTS OF PLASTIC

Na-na na na nuh-nuh nuh



Looking like a cross between the cast of *Team America* and every kung fu cliché coined since Bruce Lee donned the yellow tracksuit, *Fists of Plastic* is here to bulk up the PS3's party games roster. If you've ever played Nintendo's *Smash Bros.* you already have a fair idea of what to expect. Up to four players, either on your lounge or filled in by the CPU, brawl on screen in various modes and stages. The fighting's chaotic, though not sloppy, due to the loose physics involved – characters can easily jump half a screen, looking like a marionette without the strings, and can break their fall with a rapid kick that will skittle an opponent but also slow their own vertical velocity. Tactics play a part when limited-use weapons enter the fray and also in the territory-dominating King Of The Hill. Compared to this, and Capture The Fish (flag), Deathmatch is passé. Do make sure you have at least two mates playing and trash-talking with you, as *Fists Of Plastic* doesn't hold up in single player once you're past completing the challenges and prepared to shake your SIXAXIS with a few neatly implemented special moves.

VERDICT:
Multiplayer only, grasshopper. Take a point off if you play on your own.

8

WE WANT IT!

The PSN continues to deliver with solid PlayStation exclusive titles and well-respected series for you to dabble in. Check out to expect in the coming months.



PixelJunk Eden Encore expansion pack

If you've behaved and eaten your greens, this might just be waiting on the PlayStation Store right now.



Red Alert 3 demo

This has been out on PC and 360 for a few months, now it's our turn. We want to see how this PC-based RTS will fare next to the built-for-console *Stormrise*.



Fat Princess

Another RTS made for consoles with a slightly different take on the traditional 'save the princess' angle. We've been teased long enough about this – we want to see more!



The Punisher: No Mercy

A PSN-exclusive shooter with one of our favourite vigilantes, Frank Castle. Though the details aren't concrete, expect this to be an online-only affair, out in Autumn.

INTERNET

Gaming, trailers, downloads, friends...



ONLINE REVIEWS

HAWX - Online

Tally-ho old bean!



INFO

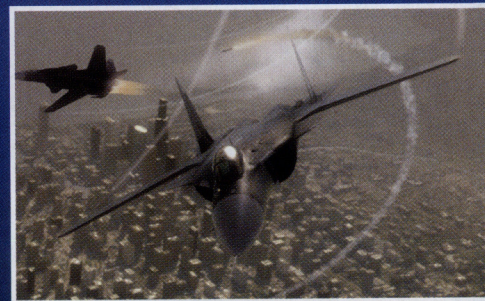
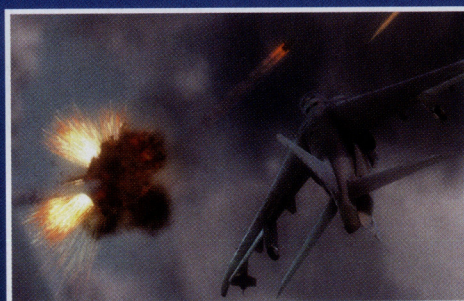
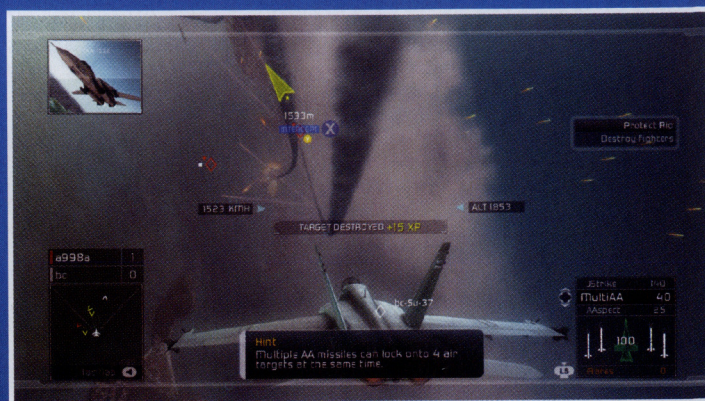
GENRE: FLIGHT
RELEASE: NOW
DISTRIBUTOR: UBISOFT
DEVELOPER: UBISOFT ROMANIA
PLAYERS: 1-8 ONLINE
PRICE: \$99.95

We went balls to the wall in single player *HAWX* last month, lamenting the game's sterility whilst praising the ease of controls and the loud, brash presentation along with the pleasing amount of explosives. The game's pretty straight-laced, though, and is definitely a Tom Clancy product – don't expect any surprises in the storyline.

Offline, the game feels remote and is a doddle on easy difficulty setting. Adding up to three wingmen in co-op can be satisfying, though it's often a pedestrian experience – it all hangs on your and your teammates' choice of difficulty. Creating or joining an existing campaign or single mission is pretty straightforward and you can drop-in-drop-out at will – even in the middle of a mission – which you'll probably do if your choice of hardware is underpowered. Though it's reasonable to think that the most amount of shit-hot planes taking out bad guys is a good thing, low-level players are disadvantaged by more experienced pilots who have better aircraft and are able to fly ahead, blowing up what they like to leave others to the scraps. While the game adapts,

throwing more enemies into the fray, each player can choose their level of difficulty when they join. In theory, it's possible for someone to wipe out a squad of enemy fighters, then double back to the other side of the map and pick another player's cherries. A few matches we played saw two guys – half of the squad – drop out, as their kills were less than a quarter of the leader. Totally demoralising. While the d-pad controls your offline wingmen, *HAWX* is, like the Clancy counterpart *EndWar*, built for voice support. If you don't have a USB headset you're going to be disadvantaged. Communication, like any multiplayer game, is key and *HAWX* is pretty sweet if you do play with people who have the imagination to adapt and play as a team. Funny, that.

Versus, or Team Deathmatch, follows in a similar vein, and this is one of the few examples where having less than the maximum number of players on screen is beneficial. Why?



WORSE THAN
PLAYING A TIGHT FPS

BETTER THAN
NOT GOING ONLINE AT ALL

FINAL SAY:

- Cannons-only makes Versus tighter
- Co-op can be rewarding...
- ... only if your teammates think alike
- Busted Versus filtering

VERDICT:

Verdict: Unbalanced and clumsy matchmaking sour the experience. Shame.

6

The main problem is it's impossible to pick the map you play on, and even if you could barely any have urban environments that enable or force you use the buildings or landscape to get an edge in the battle. Wading into an eight-players fracas becomes dizzying as you circle over and over trying to get a good angle or shake off half-a-dozen missiles. Also, it's pretty easy to be completely outgunned and outclassed – *HAWX*'s matching system needs an overhaul – and the 'every man for himself' mantra is easy to fall into, even when in a 'team'. Preventing this means you really need to get a fair way through, or even finish, the single-player campaign before joining an online scrap, otherwise expect to constantly re-spawn.

We haven't even touched on the incongruous Versus special abilities or the painful waiting times in the hangar, so while *HAWX* isn't a broken game per se, it's not much fun, either. A pity.

— Paul Taylor



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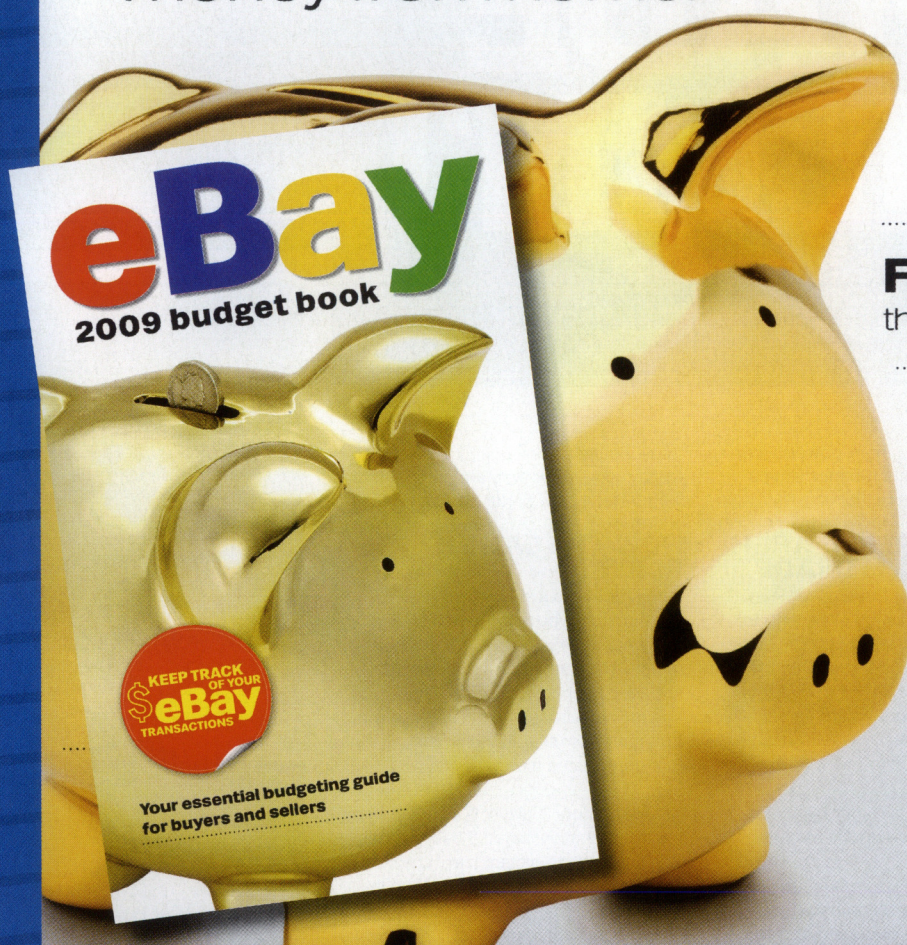
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04

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THIS ZONE WAS MADE FOR KILLIN'!

Hints, tips and dirty tricks to help you out in *Killzone 2's* Warzone - the multiplayer battlefields

Killzone 2's Warzone (the aptly named multiplayer component) is one of the best places for online action to date. That in and of itself is hardly surprising. KZ2 is insanely good - sure the single player campaign could have used maybe another level or two (and co-op, dammit!) but Warzone more than makes up for it.

Let's get stuck in, eh?

WILL YOU USE YOUR POWERS FOR GOOD OR UN-GOOD?!

Here's the thing: when you first go into Warzone you start off as either an ISA or Helghast grunt. You can let the game select for you or choose yourself. Personally we go ISA. Why? Well, after playing through the game's single player campaign three times we now tend to shoot first and think later when we see Helghast, the glowing-eyed bastards.

It's a reflex.

This pisses team-mates off. Also the Helghast look cooler than the ISA - and since it's a first-person shooter you won't have to look at your own, frankly fruity, uniform. So now you're an entity, what to do?

You can change your weapon from the default Helghast or ISA gun - the

Helghast one seems more powerful but the ISA one has a much better aiming reticle - but that's about it.

"FIRST IMPRESSI- ARGH! BANG! F--K, I'M DEAD!"

Checking out the net there have been some whingers who were expecting to have access to all classes straight away. This is not the case. We'll say that again: This. Is. Not. The. Case.

When you start out you're just a soldier - in a 32-player war with people who've probably clocked their 40th hour of game time.

But don't worry, the more you play the more skills and weapons are open to you.

So, yes, if you stick with it you'll rank up and unlock the awesome badges, abilities and various ribbons that give you yet more powers. However you may find your first 10-20 games or so you'll have your arse handed to you, in a box wrapped in your skin with your lower intestine used as a pretty ribbon.

Fear not, though, there are plenty of NOOB only games so rank up and learn the skills. Your first major skill is that of a medic. You have a cool gun that revives your team-mates and hurts your enemies. Later you'll also develop the ability to

throw health packs around the place, helping comrades who are getting riddled with bullets. That brings us to...

HOW THE GAME IS PLAYED

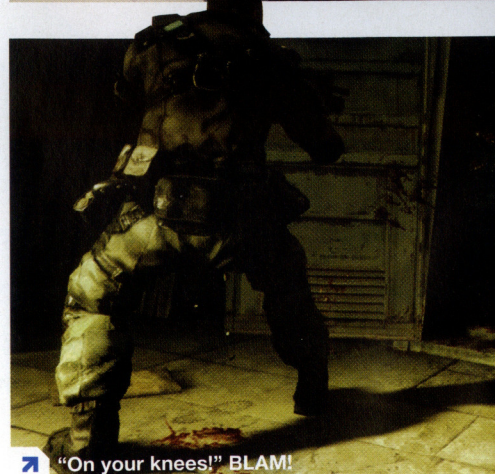
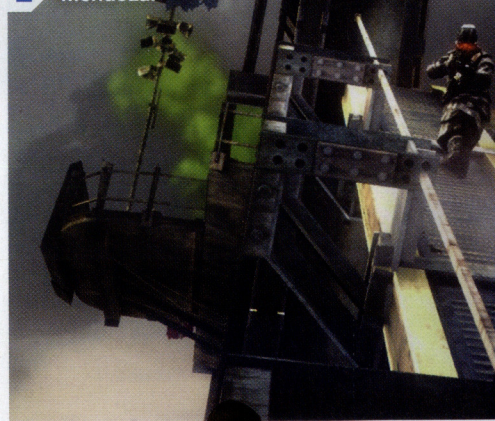
If Warzone was just a very pretty Team Deathmatch type of caper you wouldn't really need hints, tips or even a wee nudge. The baddies are bad, or good - and they need shooting. You'll get to do that in Bodycount where it's all out war. But apart from that thuggish fun there are four other game modes.

Assassination: A player is selected to be the assassination target. If he's on your side you have to protect him, if he's on the opposite side you've gotta hunt the sucker down.

Search and Retrieve: Objects appear randomly around the map and it's up to you to get said object to the goal. This occurs until the time limit runs out or one team scores the set limit.

Search and Destroy: A personal favourite, you need to get to your enemies' 'thing that needs to be blown up'. Plant C4 and keep the bastards from defusing your bomb and explosive good

▶ "Mendoza!"



▶ "On your knees!" BLAM!



➤ "Pick me!"



times ensue. Be warned, though, as the seconds tick down you might find the entire bloody 32 players planting C4, disarming C4, dropping grenades, beating your head in with the butt of their guns – it gets really intense. This also has an inverse match where you'll have to protect your own 'thing that needs to be blown up' although it's really 'thing that needs protecting' now.

Capture and Hold: Go to various locations and hold off the enemy. There are three locations. This one's also a lot of fun.

BADGES OF HONOUR

One really nice touch with Warzone is that

you can change class, mid-game, when you die. This leads to all sorts of great tips and tricks. Say you're ISA and the Helghast have sent a squad to prevent you and your chums from leaving your one spawn point. Try this...

- At the bottleneck of your spawn point use the engineer class and knock up a gun turret. These are loads of fun as, if they aren't destroyed, they keep killing the enemy – you might score half an hour after cobbling the turret together. Anyway, up with the turret and maybe lob a few grenades. What you need is a hole through. Die, come back as the scout.
- The scout can make spawn points using his special spawn point smoke grenade. So run like a mad bastard (don't worry if you're taking damage, just don't die) get as close as you can to the Helghast base and chuck a spawn point grenade. Suddenly the Helghast have to split up to keep your team mates trapped. Continue to run, make another spawn point and if it's an outside level call in air support and you'll have a cool floating robot friend – with guns a-blazin'.
- Come back as a medic and fix everyone's hurties.
- Place more strategic gun turrets as the engineer.
- Use the hyper soldier, who can run so fast he's almost invisible, and confuse the hell out of your enemies by using the grenade launcher.



KILLING IN THE NAME OF!

Once you've upgraded a bunch, the tendency is to get a bit selfish and just run around getting a huge body count. It's dicky, but it will level you up. However, if you get a decent score and your team wins you upgrade much faster. Soon you'll be able to walk into your enemies' base, looking like one of them. Your real appearance comes when you blow their heads off. Or perhaps you'd like to be the invisible sniper, protecting your men from on high.

Truthfully the best way to learn is by playing, but coming back as different classes can really bugger your foe's day. Say they have to protect something. Use the scout to spawn in two places nearby, call in air support. Come back as an engineer and knock up some turrets. Then you come back as heavily armoured, boost dude and join the turrets, airborne robot friend and team-mates by shooting rockets. Lobbing grenades or going old school and using some melee attacks.

WAR: THE WAY YOU WANT IT

Warzone lets you customise your battle arena. Objectives can last five minutes or 30. Some of the games can be removed – leaving just Bodycount (a good way to level up quickly) and with eight unique maps, all of which have hidden goodness, we reckon we'll be hanging at the Warzone quite a bit.

Also there will be downloadable content – more maps and the ability to use vehicles. Oh *Killzone 2*, how we love you.

▶ Anthony O'Connor

➤ "Sarge. If anything happens to me, remember, I love you"



STREET FIGHTER IV

Be a Hadou-can, not a Hadou-can't

Sick of playing *Street Fighter IV* like you've got muffins for fingers? Welcome to our Top Five Tips to bolster your biff in the *Street Fighter Dojo*. While they're no substitute for practising 'til your thumbs grow golf-ball calluses, they will put you on the road to becoming the sort of bone cruncher that leaves opponents cussing their puppies.

5 BE A CHUCKER

Years ago if you followed a blocked attack with a cheeky throw at an arcade you'd be at risk of having your kidney cut out. Not so anymore. In fact, it's an integral part of fighting defensive characters. Ken users should also master his Kara Throw for tournament-level play. Push Towards and MK, and Throw the millisecond afterwards. Do it right, and Ken will take a step forward before throwing. Zangief can also Kara cancel out of his HK into a Spinning Piledriver! Difficult but deadly.

4 PLAY IT SAFE

In a game with split-second combinations that lead into super and ultra combos, a moment of vulnerability can lose you the round. To bolster your play, learn which of your character's moves are safe. Safe moves are ones that don't leave you vulnerable if they're blocked. An example is Balrog's Dashing Straight that is safe when used from maximum distance. Ken's heavy Shoryuken – used so recklessly online – is an example of a move that is not safe and should be used with care.

3 BUFFER YOUR MOVES

Buffering is all about entering commands for a future move while in the process of delivering another. It's possible to tag Ken's Ultra Combo on the end of a jumping heavy punch this way. Just do the first fireball motion as his first hit connects and the second with three punches the moment he lands. Buffering is also great for charge opponents. As Guile you can start the motion for his Super move, press punch half way through to throw a Sonic Boom, and instantly go into his Double Flash.

2 CROSS IT UP

Cross ups are still as devastating as they were in previous versions of the game. They require you to jump over an opponent and hit them on the back of the head as you pass the vertical axis. The opponent has to be quick enough to switch their block to the opposite direction – a tough ask. Use these to start huge combinations as you're opponent is getting up. Certain moves, like Blanka's Backstep Roll, can also deliver cross up strikes.

1 ULTRA IS KING

Don't speculate when it comes to pulling out your big-gun Ultra Moves. Use them after a successful Focus Attack strike that crumples your opponent, or use them after juggles or EX Cancels. For instance, it's possible for Abel to use his crouching HP to knock an opponent in the air and follow up with his Ultra. Some players, like Ryu, can also EX Cancel (Focus Attack + Dash) out of a Shoryuken and strike freely with their Ultra Combo.



Be a chucker



Play it safe



Buffer your moves



Cross it up

UNLOCKABLE CHARACTERS

Jump into the Arcade Mode, select the EASIEST option, and set each match to one round to speed up the process.

Akuma: Unlock Cammy, Fei Long, Dan, Sakura, Rose, and Gen. Then jump into Arcade mode and beat Seth without losing a round. Along the way you must have won perfect at least once (if playing one-round matches as advised). Defeat Seth, and then defeat Akuma when he appears.

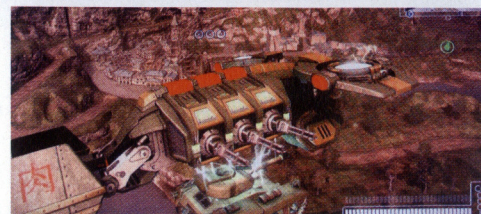
Gouken: Finish the game with Akuma, make sure the game is set to one round, then get at least one Perfect, three Ultra Finishes, five First Attacks, and don't lose a round. Beat Gouken to unlock him!

Seth: Beat the game with everyone else, including Gouken and Akuma. To keep tabs on who you haven't finished it with, check the Gallery Ending Movies.



TOP 10 THINGS TO DO IN WARHAWK

It's surprising to us that most of you aren't well acquainted with the best damned online multiplayer title out there, as some of us (*ahem*) live there. After logging in nearly 300 hours, here's some of the coolest things we've done or bore witness to



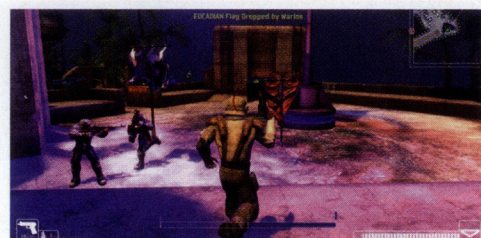
7 GIVE A LIFT IN A DROPSHIP

Another brilliant addition via booster pack, was the inclusion of massive dropships, with one pilot, it also holds up to six additional crew mates, each with a missile battery at their disposal, and you can pick up vehicles as well. Why let a buddy jeep or tank it with the flag, when you can just pick him up, and give homeboy a lift back to base, posthaste?



8 GET A CONVOY GOING

It's one of the most awesome parts of the game if done right. If you've got command of the majority of zones, get a convoy of tanks, APCs and jeeps headed to the base. You can watch each other's back, defend a flag carrier if that's the case, but it completely demoralises your opponent to see wave after wave of troops raping their home base.



9 GRAB THE FLAG AS SOMEONE'S ABOUT TO SCORE

This can be a dog move, but it's not your fault. Usually, once you get the flag, the whole team's gunning for you, and you're never safe. We can't tell you how many matches we took it 99% of the way home, only to die mere feet away, and some bastard team mate scoops it up for the points. It sucks, but turnabout is fair play, so if you see a bro heading home with the flag, follow him, just in case. It could be your lucky day.



10 KNIFE SOMEONE IN A JEEP

We found this entirely by accident after being run over several times, by some prick doing nothing but circuits in a jeep when we were pinned down, running down squad mates left and right. We happened to equip our knife as he drove by and swiped at him. Low and behold, he was sliced and diced, and we found our favourite new little trick. Guys don't expect it, especially flag carriers, and you can almost picture the stunned look on their face.



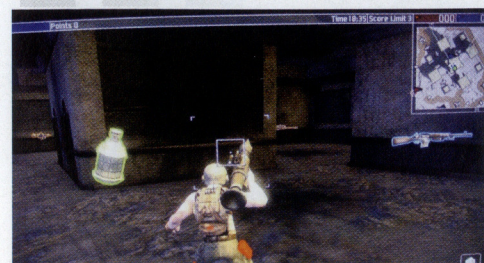
1 BEELINE FOR THE FLAG

So simple, yet so goddamned fun and effective. Grab a plane and go straight for the flag, no ifs, ands or buts. Most of the time, they don't notice until you're away or are stunned by the sheer audacity. Sure you may die in three seconds, but you could catch them napping, or at least give your teammates time to get respawn points whilst their focus is on you.



2 JUMP OUTTA THE PLANE WITH YOUR JETPACK

The latest downloadable pack armed you with a freaking jetpack. Yep, you heard, right, but it gets better. You can use it as an ejector seat in any vehicle, including your plane. Why not line up the home-base, hit full throttle and take off in your jetpack as your plane becomes a harbinger of doom for anything it lands on?



3 FIND THE SECRET ROOMS IN DESTROYED CAPITAL

On the Destroyed Capital map, each base is located in a large tower. If you're inquisitive enough, take a plane to the top and you'll see two doorways. Inside is a small room, with every troop weapon in the game (except mines). Then use your elevated position to snipe, call in an air-strike, or take off with your shiny new toys.

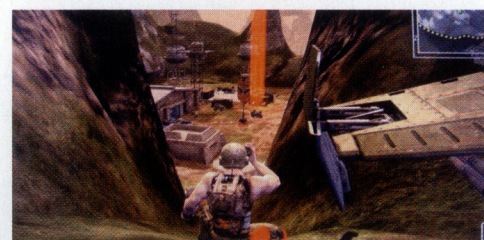
4 GO APE IN THE ENEMY'S BASE IN HERO

In Hero mode, as said hero, you get every weapon souped-up and triple health, but why bother trying to attack the other team's hero? Jump a plane, and get into their base (this is devastating in Destroyed Capital) and let your flamethrower do the talking. It doesn't take long to burn someone to a crisp, and you'll rack up the points.



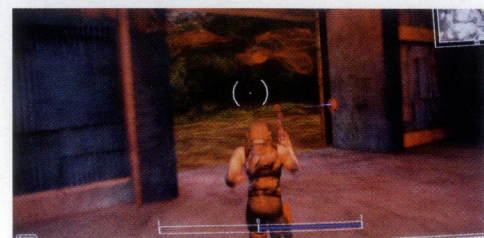
5 GET OFF A PRECISION AIR-STRIKE IN THE MOUNTAINS

Many maps have specific points set up for sniping or air-strikes, but there are so many other spots to find, especially in Archipelago and Eucadia. We particularly like landing on a ridge near the enemy's base, hiding, and waiting for a team mate to go for the flag. As the defenders clamp down, you can come with the thunder and clear them a path using the binoculars. Our best effort took down seven soldiers in one shot.



6 RUN RIOT IN AN ENEMY BASE

Still on the subject of enemy bases, one of our faves is to pinch the flag, and before scampering away, we generously dump some mines throughout, to (a) discourage heated pursuit and (b) keep them on their toes. When you die and respawn, you're not expecting enemy mines to litter the area, and before they realise it... BOOOM!



INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

WANTED

My precious...



DEAD TO RIGHTS: RETRIBUTION

MMMMmm... crime! This continuation of the series from Namco Bandai where you alternately control vice cop Jack Slate and his trusty pooch Shadow promises a new hybrid combat system. Wow, it sounds like *Shadow Dancer* all over again, but with more grit!



GUITAR HERO: GREATEST HITS

Videogame pop is eating itself, with this compilation of tracks plucked from *Guitar Hero I, II, III* and *Rocks the '80s*. All 48 tracks – all masters now – have been given the full band treatment, including DragonForce's mega-hard 'Through the Fire and Flames'. Gulp!



INFAMOUS

The wait's almost over for this intriguing third-person mini-apocalypse-meets-Heroes shooter. A courier's package goes BOOM, taking out several city blocks and giving said courier superpowers. You must choose to help the city's people or tell them to get stuffed.



THE KING OF FIGHTERS XII

What the world needs now is SMACK! Erm, no, not that kind of smack, the one derived from punching somebody – duh! Luckily then, another beat 'em up is on its way, with SNK's awesome hand drawn 2D-and proud-of-it reboot of the classic arcade franchise.



SINGULARITY

A future-set FPS with puzzle-solving elements, the twist here is a TARDIS-like device (well, it doesn't look like a police box, as it's handheld, but it functions like it) which allows things to be sent back and forth in time – everything from crates to bad guys.



SPLIT/SECOND

Burnout? Old news, mate, so get your eyes around this. Sounding like a 10-year-old's wishlist of fast cars, explosions and death-defying stunts, this one comes from the same mob who made the rather special *Pure*. We're expecting big things.

SIMPLY THE BEST...

The best of the best of the best of the *best*

ADVENTURE

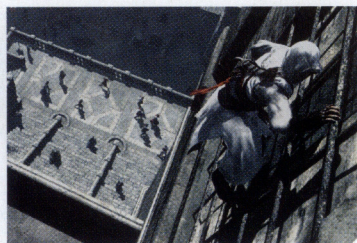


GRAND THEFT AUTO IV

"GTAIV is a game 10 out of 10 was designed for – a game that takes your rising, constantly spiralling expectations and vapourises them with a product so sublime you'll tell your grandkids about it."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar North PUBLISHER: Rockstar PLAYERS: 1-16

10



ASSASSIN'S CREED

"Assassin's Creed is a masterpiece, plain and simple. This game wouldn't be better if Jesus Christ himself designed it. After *Assassin's Creed*, the world of videogaming seems like a different place."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1

10



THE ELDER SCROLLS IV: OBLIVION

"The first genuine classic next gen RPG. What *Oblivion* achieves is technically monstrous, to the extent that it can almost be overwhelming to most players. Even post-*Fallout 3*, this is a must play for RPG fans."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1

10



LITTLE BIGPLANET

"By rejigging the traditional platformer with physics and an accessible level creator, *LittleBigPlanet* becomes something delightfully simple and postmodern – a game that everyone can play, and endlessly recreate."

DEVELOPER: Media Molecule PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-4

10

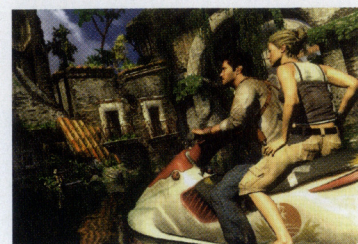


MGS4: GUNS OF THE PATRIOTS

"An incredibly layered gaming experience that is almost inexhaustible. Probably the best game available on the PlayStation 3, and definitely the best exclusive. Buy and play this videogame now."

DEVELOPER: Kojima Productions PUBLISHER: Atari PLAYERS: 1-16

10



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

"The only bad thing about it is it ends, but hot damn it takes you on a transcendently enjoyable ride. There's no reason why you shouldn't buy this game."

DEVELOPER: Naughty Dog PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1

10



DEAD SPACE

"The best survival horror title this generation – by an absolute country mile. *Dead Space* combines a smart story with incredible visuals, sound design to create what is arguably the scariest video game ever made. A must-play on every possible level."

DEVELOPER: EA Redwood Shores PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1

9



FALLOUT 3

"Taking the solid base of *Oblivion* and placing into a post apocalyptic wasteland always sounded like a great idea – and *Fallout 3* proves that concept brilliantly. This is a game that will astound you with the sheer depth and enormity of its incredible vision."

DEVELOPER: Bethesda PUBLISHER: Red Ant PLAYERS: 1

9

SHOOTER



RESISTANCE 2

"Visually inconsistent, but it's difficult to criticise a game that attempts so much, and succeeds so often. Peerless in terms of size and scale, *Resistance 2* provides a brilliantly rounded package for fans of first person shooters."

DEVELOPER: Insomniac PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-64

9



KILLZONE 2

"Visually *Killzone 2* runs through the competition like a bull in the proverbial china shop. Lucky then, that the game's design and story matches the lofty production values. *Killzone 2* is the first-person shooter evolved."

DEVELOPER: Guerrilla PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-16

10



BIOSHOCK

"As a sub-par port, minus the promised extra content, *BioShock* is a disappointment. BUT you'd be silly to miss out on what is undoubtedly one of the landmark games of this generation so far. In many ways, this is a must play."

DEVELOPER: 2K Marin PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1

8



CALL OF DUTY 4: MODERN WARFARE

"A fantastic shooter with a dizzying array of combat scenarios and packed with bleeding-edge military hardware. *COD4* is one of the tightest shooters we've ever played."

DEVELOPER: Infinity Ward PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-16

10



WARHAWK

"Tighter than a bull's arse on fight night and smoother than a glass of Guinness, *Warhawk* is a seriously superior piece of software. Multiplayer only, but you'd be barking mad to miss it."

DEVELOPER: Incognito PUBLISHER: Sony PLAYERS: 1-32

9



THE ORANGE BOX

"*The Orange Box* is ripe, in season, and packed with vitamin value. With five quality titles, including the sublime *Portal*, there truly is something here for everybody. An unmissable package."

DEVELOPER: Valve PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16

9



BROTHERS IN ARMS: HELL'S HIGHWAY

"Momentarily plugging the huge gap left by *Call of Duty 4: Modern Warfare*, *Hell's Highway* works by ploughing new ground as a shooter. Well-balanced squad mechanics are combined with real intensity and emotion."

DEVELOPER: Gearbox PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

8



BATTLEFIELD: BAD COMPANY

"Taking destructibility to a new insanely high level, *Bad Company* is a title unafraid to push new ground. With some excellent characterisation, and some of the best multiplayer in the business, it's easily the best *Battlefield* title on console to date."

DEVELOPER: DICE PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20

7



FAR CRY 2

"At times overstretching itself, *Far Cry 2*'s breath-taking ambition can often be its undoing, but it's still one of the best shooters out there. Plus, setting stuff on fire is still a ridiculous amount of fun."

DEVELOPER: Ubisoft Montreal PUBLISHER: Ubisoft PLAYERS: 1-16

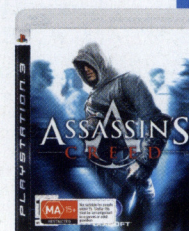
8

TOP 5

PS3 COVER ART

ASSASSIN'S CREED

Okay, so it just looks like a bloke in a hoodie, but on closer inspection the still image of Altair set against a blur of bluish activity behind personifies his stealthy nature.



COMMAND & CONQUER: RED ALERT 3

This selectively-coloured collision of Russian stereotypes ranging from a bear to a ball-busting babe is one of the most arresting covers we've seen. Women in uniform? Yeah!



HEAVENLY SWORD

Maybe we've got a thing for redheads, or maybe we've got a thing for arse-kicking, 'we mean it, man!' babes. Either way, this stunning artwork is most certainly eye-catching.



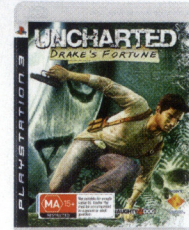
LITTLEBIGPLANET

Putting aside our if-this-is-wrong-we-don't-wanna-be-right love of Sackboy, this cover is so bright, happy and unique that it describes the game visually and stands out in a sea of drab.



UNCHARTED: DRAKE'S FORTUNE

With its neat combination of ferny jungle greens, a skull and camouflaged Nathan Drake, not to mention a bit of serious go-anywhere artillery, we just dig this one, all right?



INDEX

All the games that matter on PS3!

MAGIC MOMENTS



GAME: Ratchet & Clank: Tools of Destruction
CONSOLE: PS3
YEAR: 2007

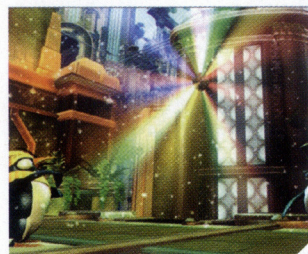
THE MOMENT:

The first foray of every PlayStation junkie's fave furry critter and robot dynamic duo into next-gen saw all manner of new mechanics, whistles, bells and other gizmoey goodies added to the successful third-person blaster mix. Not least of these was a slew of sparkly, new-fangled weaponry, some of which masqueraded under the nomenclature 'gadgets', others 'devices'.

Sure, the more standard bang-bang-shoot-shoot fare on offer had boundless power-up possibilities thanks to the wonders of Raritarium. Yeah, the tornado launcher was kind of cool when you unleashed a bit of Wizard of Oz-styled twister fury on unsuspecting foes. But if you really wanted to see those adversaries squirm, the weapon of choice (oh, all right, the device of choice) was one found upon encountering a GrummelNet vendor on the rather hostile little planet Cobalia. It was called the 'Groovitron'.

It may not have actually harmed your enemies like something firepowery, but what it lacked in damaging oomph it made up for in squirt-whatever-you-happen-to-be-drinking-at-the-time-through-your-nose cacks. Here you were, out in space, controlling a doggy/catty/whatever the hell a Lombax actually is thing when you'd let this baby rip and the bad guys stopped shooting and started getting down, exorcising their inner funky by strutting their stuff under a disco ball like it was the 1970s all over again. Naturally, assuming you could stop peeing yourself laughing long enough, this offered the perfect opportunity to zapinate them into abject four-on-the-floor oblivion.

Much like what happened to disco back in the day, really.



RACING



PURE

"Pure shot straight from nowhere to rub *MotorStorm*'s face in its glorious graphics and watertight gameplay. It's not as varied as its main competitor, but damn does it play well."

DEVELOPER: Black Rock **PUBLISHER:** Funtastic **PLAYERS:** 1-16

9

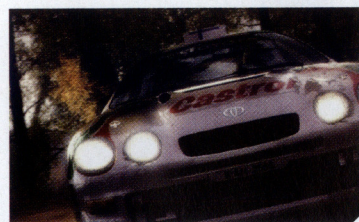


GRAN TURISMO 5: PROLOGUE

"An anemic game package that somehow survives by being what is quite possibly the greatest example of audio-visual excellence on the PlayStation 3 thus far. Well worth checking out."

DEVELOPER: Polyphony Digital
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



COLIN MCRÆ: DIRT

"The great man rests in peace, but his legacy lives on with this stellar racer that brilliantly bridges the seemingly impenetrable gap between arcade and sim. A seamlessly presented title that juggles depth and accessibility with a precise gusto."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-16

9



SEGA RALLY

"To appreciate *Sega Rally* you'll have to continually remind yourself that it's a deceptively life-like caricature of a hardcore rallying experience. Not brain surgery, but it delivers the fun in big muddy spades."

DEVELOPER: Sega Driving Studio
PUBLISHER: Sega
PLAYERS: 1-6

9



RACE DRIVER GRID

"This bastard rock n' roll son of V8 Supercars and Colin McRae: *DiRT* is hot. Your lower jaw will relax. Your eyelids will take five. And you'll start to drool. Shame it ditched its sim roots, but the missing in action V8 DLC has us all a quiver."

DEVELOPER: Codemasters
PUBLISHER: Atari
PLAYERS: 1-12

9



FERRARI CHALLENGE

"Ferrari Challenge will surprise you by being that little bit better than you thought it could ever be. A hardcore racing sim that thrives on the details, this is a suitable title to fend off the petrol heads until *Gran Turismo 5* arrives to rewrite the racing handbook."

DEVELOPER: System 3
PUBLISHER: Red Ant
PLAYERS: 1-16

8



MOTORSTORM

"In our humble opinion *MotorStorm* was the best launch title on the fledgling PS3 – and arguably it's one of the greatest launch titles of all time. Defining next-gen racing as a platform upon which smart AI and terrain deformation could thrive, *MotorStorm* reinvented the arcade racer."

DEVELOPER: Evolution Studios
PUBLISHER: Sony
PLAYERS: 1-16

10



MIDNIGHT CLUB: LOS ANGELES

"Within its niche sub-genre, *MC: LA* reigns supreme. Well designed, rolling objectives, and an insane amount of customisation, *MC: LA* manages to rise above the rabble, easily beating off *Need for Speed Undercover* at its own game."

DEVELOPER: Rockstar San Diego
PUBLISHER: Rockstar
PLAYERS: 1-16

7



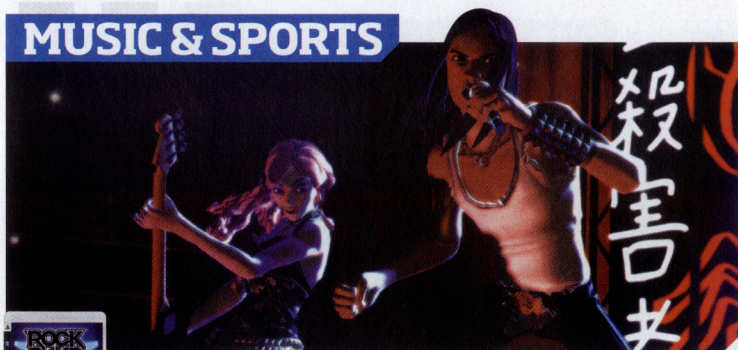
BURNOUT PARADISE

"You'll lament the thoughtless removal of splitscreen and the lack of a retry button, but you'll marvel at the slick frame rate, the sun drenched city, and Criterion's stellar commitment to free downloadable content. Awesome."

DEVELOPER: Criterion
PUBLISHER: EA
PLAYERS: 1-16

9

MUSIC & SPORTS



ROCK BAND

"A triumph. Harmonix has found the formula for a truly great music game – immaculate presentation, great tunes and a job for as many of your friends as possible. You wanted the best, you got the best."

DEVELOPER: Harmonix PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-4

10



TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 09

"Golf, for most of the populace, is about as exciting as watching paint dry in an old folk's home, so it's testament to EA that this game actually works well."

DEVELOPER: EA PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-16

8

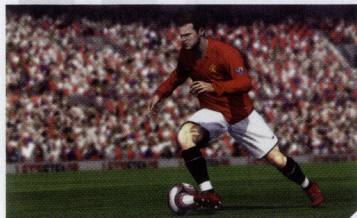


SKATE 2

"Despite some frame rate issues, *SKATE 2* is undoubtedly one of the greatest sports game's ever conceived. The controls are flawless, the city is dense, the balance is sublime."

DEVELOPER: EA Black Box PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-8

9

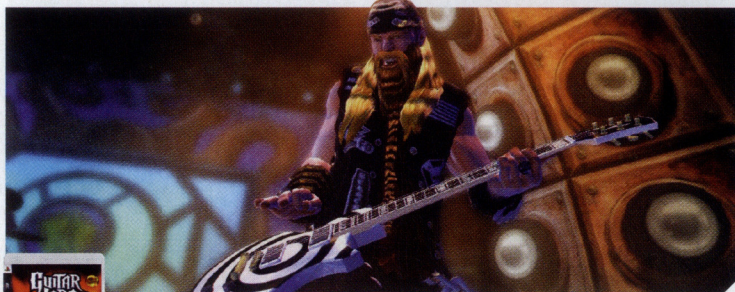


FIFA 09

"With it's new momentum physics, stellar visuals, and engaging gameplay, 2009 is finally the year that the *FIFA* franchise manages to leap the perennial hurdle that is *Pro Evolution Soccer*. Now Konami have to play catch up."

DEVELOPER: EA Canada PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-20

9



GUITAR HERO WORLD TOUR

"It's a tough call – *GHWT* blitzes *Rock Band* in terms of equipment, but struggles to match up to its sublime functionality. Still, it's an unmissable multiplayer experience."

DEVELOPER: Neversoft PUBLISHER: Activision PLAYERS: 1-4

9



NBA 2K9

"Basketball's hardly the national sport of Australia, but that doesn't mean that the game can't be fun. This is a decent representation of Barack Obama's favourite sport. Fans of basketball should check this out."

DEVELOPER: 2K PUBLISHER: 2K PLAYERS: 1-10

7



VIRTUA TENNIS 3

"Still one of the few titles that manages to pull off true 1080p high definition visuals, *Virtua Tennis*, to this day, still remains unchallenged for the title of best tennis game ever made."

DEVELOPER: SEGA PUBLISHER: SEGA PLAYERS: 1-4

8



FIGHT NIGHT ROUND 3

"Featuring a dual analogue control system (that paved the way for the sublime *SKATE*) *Fight Night Round 3* is perhaps one of the greatest sports games ever conceived. Bone-crunching."

DEVELOPER: EA Chicago PUBLISHER: EA PLAYERS: 1-2

8



TOP 5

PSN CHILLOUT EXPERIENCES

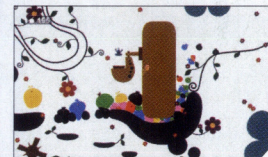
FLOWER

Ignoring the blah hippy-trippy connotations of "you're a petal, floating on the breeze" you're, erm, a petal, floating on the breeze – but in a good, chillin' way. Honest!



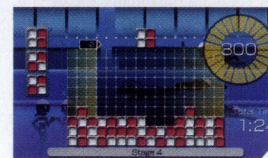
LOCOROCO COCORECCHO!

Marketed as an interactive screensaver rather than a game, the blobby experience may be pared down, but it gives ace chill factor just from waving the controller around.



LUMINES SUPERNOVA

Everybody's fave time waster from the PSP gets the PS3 treatment. From the laidback tunes to the sideways *Tetris*-esque happenings, this gentle puzzler makes lost time!



NOBY NOBY BOY

Biggest. Headbonk. Ever! From the dude who gave the PS2 the *Katamari* games (make a big ball of crud) comes this stretchy bargain. \$6.95 for the best drug ever? Count us in!



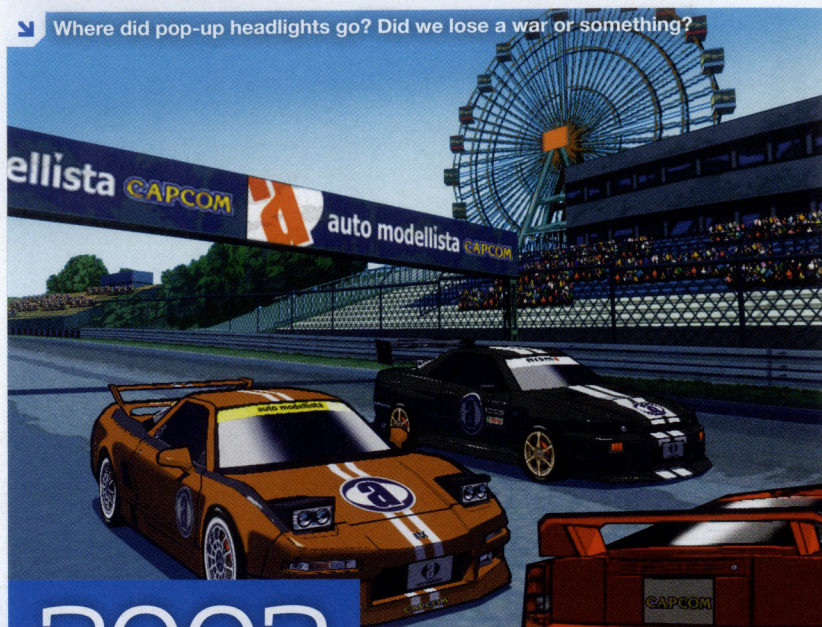
ZUMA

A prodigious absorber of productivity on the PC, reclining on the couch blasting ancient marbles is just too hard to resist. Go the 'Gauntlet' mode for the ultimate in aceness.



INFAMOUS

Where did pop-up headlights go? Did we lose a war or something?



VJ: A far less dirty acronym than it sounds



2002

AUTO MODELLISTA

Driving the hard cel

PlayStation 2 owners really were spoilt for choice when shopping for a racing game. The big three disciplines of closed-circuit, street and rally, in both arcade and sim strains, were generously represented over the console's life with several franchises pumping out solid iterations, while some coughed and spluttered before stalling at the start line. *Auto Modellista* belongs to the latter category, which is a real shame because in many respects this was ahead of its time. A straight-up arcade racer with outrageous spoilers and exhausts, *Modellista* preceeded the 'street' trend pushed down gaming's collective throats by the *Need for Speed*, *Midnight Club* and *Juiced* series. The roster of motors was compact but respectable; a mix of modern and de rigour old-school iconic models (hello AE86!), as well as some quirky examples that have rarely been seen since, such as the disturbingly angular Dome RL Zero. Aftermarket manufacturers were present, brands (at the time) familiar only to the tuning elite. An update was released the following year in the States with US manufacturers included to appeal to the market, but failed to address the game's key weaknesses. Petrol heads could tear around circuit and street tracks

and Japanese hill runs that were devoid of traffic, while progression followed standard conventions: win a race, be rewarded with new cars, as well as aesthetic and mechanical upgrades. Frustratingly, *Modellista* was a Blind Man's Bluff collect-a-thon as, while there were plenty of decals for your car, virtual *objets d'art* for your garage (see 'Garage Life') to be unlocked, there wasn't much indication as to what conditions you needed to satisfy to acquire this virtual swag. Persistence or anal-retentiveness was a requisite to race the same tracks and tournaments over and over trying to fill in the blanks.

The most exciting and memorable aspect about the package was its cel-shading graphical style, a phenomenon popularised by *Jet Set Radio* on Dreamcast, and used in *XIII* on PS2 as well as *The Legend of Zelda: The Windwaker* on Gamecube. Cars and tracks looked amazing in bright, vibrant colours and the game ran at a tidy and consistent frame-rate. Accelerate to a decent speed on track and the buffeting wind would be represented by cartoon-like lines vibrating off the front and sides of the car, an impressive style and effect that hasn't been used since. Whilst it looked spectacular, the game unfortunately fell

apart at the first corner. Cars didn't have enough weight to them, so navigating hairpin turns on the brutal downhill runs was haphazard, plus it was impossible to pull off even a weak powerslide. The result was a car porn game where your eyes were entertained but your brain was left lacking a solid challenge. To an extent, form was acknowledged over function with a VJ/remix mode where you could make your own music video based on a saved replay of a race, a short evolution away from *Gran Turismo*'s virtual camera. While it's hard to recommend this as a game in its own right, it needs a sequel – and one done right. **Paul Taylor**



DETAILS

CONSOLE: PS2
DEVELOPER: CAPCOM
COUNTRY OF ORIGIN: JAPAN
CURRENT APPROXIMATE PRICE: \$30 (EBAY)

GARAGE LIFE

Your garage was more than a place to stash your car. It might seem totally frivolous but the wealth of stickers, posters and non-interactive tools available to decorate gave players a sense of ownership – not just for their car, but where it was parked. They could say, "This is my garage, I put that work bench there, those shelves against the wall. That's my radular 240Z looking awesome in front of that retro Michelin sign." It was easy to spend more time tinkering and making your car and surrounds look good than being out on the track, though the sad indictment is that this was more enjoyable than actually racing.



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PA75965 - BAD COP	PA79442 - SCHOOLGIRL
PA77521 - MISS UK STRIP	PA80443 - 3 MIN STRIP
PA78036 - FANTASY BABE	PA78863 - POOLSIDE BABE
PA79390 - G-STRING QUEEN	PA77975 - SEXY KITTY

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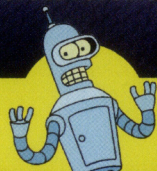
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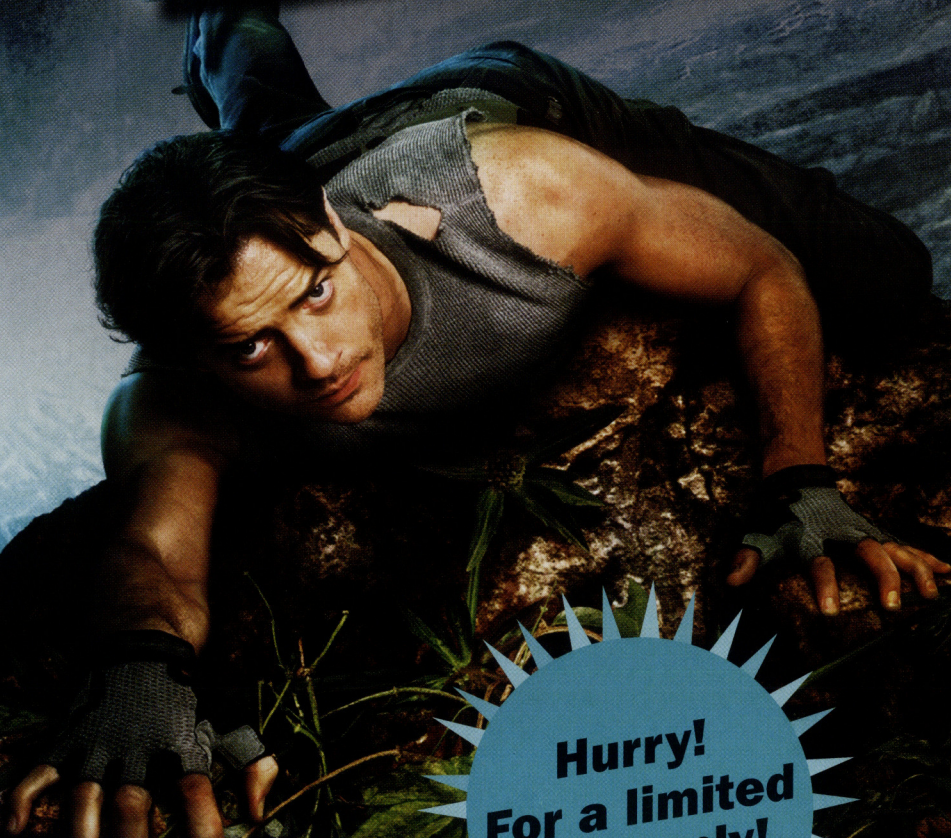
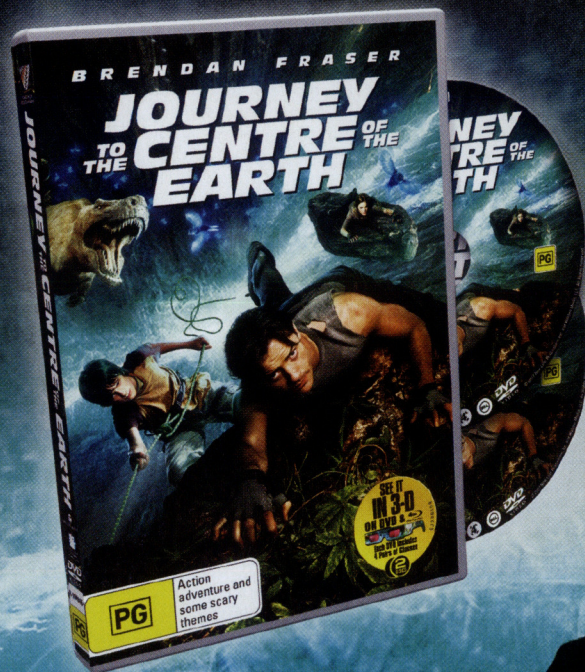
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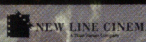
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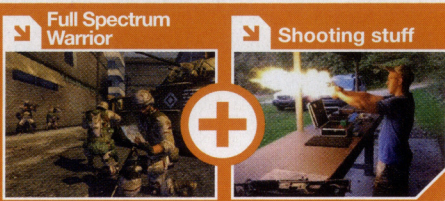


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INCOMING

Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising

IT'S LIKE...



PS3 GENRE: SHOOTER | RELEASE: WINTER 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: CODEMASTERS

OPERATION FLASHPOINT: DRAGON RISING

BRAVO Company is Oscar Mike...

Like a prodigal son returning to the fold after a long absence, so too, *Operation Flashpoint: Dragon Rising* is set to make a splash, after a seven-year break between drinks. The pinnacle of war simulation started out here, well before your *Full Spectrum Warriors* and the like, *Operation Flashpoint* (and it's cousins *ArmaA*, and *ArmaA: Queen's Gambit*) set the standard by offering players the most lifelike depiction of war, in all its glory and horror, while still managing to create enjoyable and immensely challenging scenarios to play out.

KEEPING IT REAL

To describe the *Operation Flashpoint* experience as intense and hyper-realistic is like saying, Gordon Ramsay's a funny bastard, Megan Fox is sorta hot, or Trump's got a coupla bucks saved up; in other words, you're stating the bleeding obvious. The strict attention to detail and focus on an almost simulation type

of gameplay is the backbone of what *Operation Flashpoint* has always been about, and with the exceptional leaps forward powered by their own, long-in-development engine, Ego Technology, they could very well deliver above and beyond what they set out to do.

Whilst the original dealt with the Cold War period and was accordingly set in Russia, the playing field has moved to Northern Japan (hence the 'Dragon Rising' in the title) and incorporated modern warfare into the mix. There are no heroes in this war. No Michael Bay inspired explosions to decimate the countryside making Mother Nature piss her pants-suit. Just a real depiction of war, with concentration on developing intelligent strategies, and executing them as flawlessly as possible with the latest greatest tools of the trade – and don't worry about feeling fenced in, as you've got plenty of room to work your way through, but more on that later.

INFO BYTE

Fans complained about the lack of cover in the original, hence the lush forests, buildings and sandbags available as oversized bulletproof vests.





Not pictured: bullets

"This telescope's absolute rubbish."

Instead of mowing the lawn, just shoot it short

THE HORROR!

Even if you look at the teaser trailer released, it was strangely (and appealingly) devoid of the usual fluff and grandiose popcorn movie trappings. Forget about dudes doing dives forward in slow motion as filmed by John Woo, or throwing a grenade and, as luck would have it, setting off a chain of explosions making Hiroshima pale in comparison, or soaking up ten thousand bullets Chow Yun Fat, HK style and limping away simply shrugging it all off. That just ain't gonna happen. These are precision military strikes, with no fanfare. Enemies are capped quickly, expertly, and then it's on to the next target. The in-your-face atrocities of war are on display, and their ensuing consequences, in all their unconscionable glory.

Actions have dire repercussions, and *Operation Flashpoint* has always made it a point to remind you, in case you forgot. The graphic brutality of it all comes crashing down around you when a bullet penetrates a squad-mate, inflicting authentic wounds and convincing agony. This just doesn't feel like a game, and it sets *Operation Flashpoint* apart from the crowd.

“To describe the *Operation Flashpoint* experience as intense and hyper-realistic is like saying, Gordon Ramsay's a funny bastard, Megan Fox is sorta hot, or Trump's got a coupla bucks saved up; in other words, you're stating the bleeding obvious”

YOU SO PRETTY

There are so many little tweaks and nuances to what we've seen, with real-time shadows, buildings changing colour, sun glints, reflected off a variety of surfaces, and that's just daytime! At night, every action seems almost punctuated by a subtle lighting effect or cue, from lamps above doorways, to the reflected light on a soldier's face from a muzzle flash as he spends a round. The war zone really comes alive with all these delicate and deliberate touches. It's quite remarkable, and that's just the beginning.

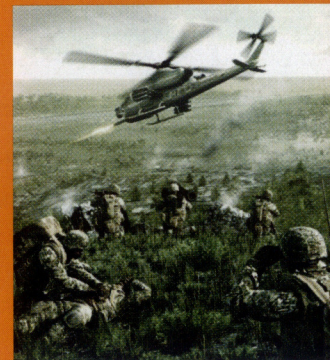
The scope is immense with 220 square kilometres

to work through. TWO HUNDRED AND TWENTY SQUARE KILOMETRES of missions, extractions, tank jaunts, helicopter flights and anything else that tickles your fancy (See 'Size Does Matter'). But that wasn't what really impressed us. What took us by surprise, like a frag in a latrine, were the entirely destructible environments, and real-time effects of your actions.

Let's just say, for instance, you destroy a key building, or inadvertently blow up a bridge. You better hope it wasn't your main supply route, or you are seriously boned, FUBAR big-time. It won't respawn: it's gone baby, and that is pretty damned sweet, bringing with it a whole new level of tactics to your assaults. The days of blasting everything in sight, willy-nilly, bummer the outcome, are over. Now, you must co-ordinate attacks and think before you pop off a grenade launcher, and that's a neat step forward for the genre.

DELTA... JOIN ALPHA IN THE STRIKE ZONE

It would be remiss of us if we didn't highlight the easy-to-use tactical system, weaponry and have a wee word on multi-player. When approaching enemy troops or a new skirmish, you can activate your squad's tactics via the D-pad, with simple commands like Regroup, Flank or Attack,



SIZE DOES MATTER

To put the engagement zone into perspective, and the freedom of movement we thought we'd lay it all out for you in simple terms. The battleground is 220 square kilometres. Think about that for a second. That's a helluva lot of terrain to cover, flank, blow up, defend, capture and destroy, innit? There are free flowing missions that crop up, as well as objectives, which could be as simple as providing cover fire for a friendly unit as they retreat, or ramping it up with special ops teams delivering covert strikes.

and you can cancel these at any time. They pop up fairly unobtrusively on the screen, and brings a bit of a *Full Spectrum Warrior* into play.

As far as the gun show goes? You got it all, knives, automatics, grenade launchers, lasers to lace sites for air strikes, the whole shebang. Obviously it's dependent on the mission, but variety is the spice of death, they say, and while details are scant on multi-player, we've heard rumblings of four player co-op missions. Plus, we're sure all the usual Deathmatch and CTF modes will return from the original, pimped out and ready to take for a spin, as well as Codemasters' slant on King of the Hill, and fan favourite Search and Destroy.

If you're looking to get your war on, and like it real, down and dirty, start working out your strike zones, dig in, lay down some cover fire, and hold position, cause Winter is a ways away.

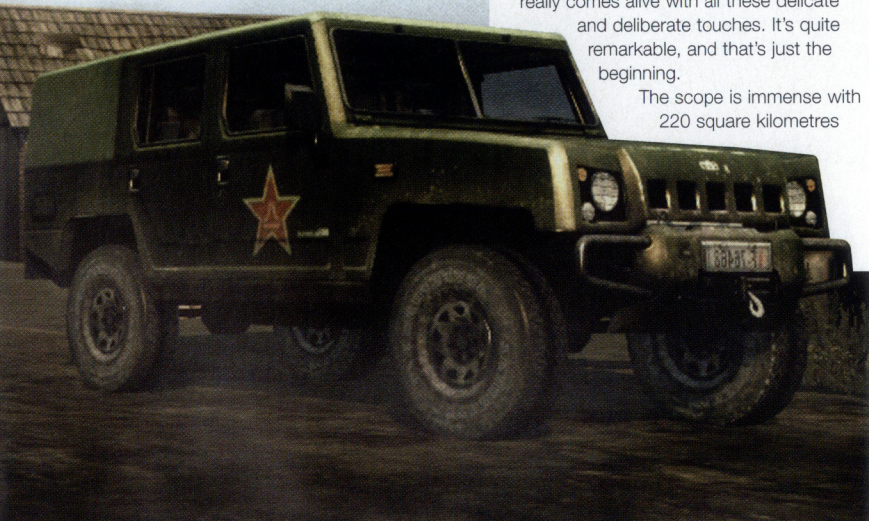
You'll want to stay frosty for this one.

▲ Dave Kozicki

WE SAY

- Amazing lighting effects
- Ultra realistic
- Deep multi-player

OPS IS...
Locked and loaded



INDEPTH

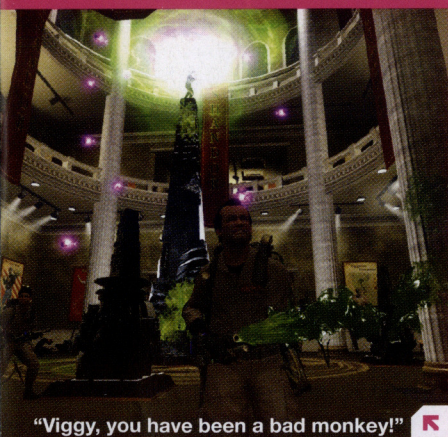
Ghostbusters



“Dan [Aykroyd] has turned to the videogame arena where no one has to age or pork up”

WHAT YA GONNA PLAY?

Reasons why we want *Ghostbusters*. Now. Please



“Viggy, you have been a bad monkey!”



Ghostbusters (1984), was one of those movies that was near perfect, in that it achieved exactly what it set out to accomplish. A film that deftly combined comedy, horror, groundbreaking special effects (at the time) and a solid plot that didn't dumb down any narrative complexities, cribbing liberally from the literary likes of H.P. Lovecraft for its big end baddie – Gozer.

Then, under pressure from the studio, the same gang made a really crappy sequel in 1989. It was howlingly bad. The lowlight being a walking Statue of Liberty powered by ‘good vibes’. Yikes.

Like *Highlander II* or *Men in Black II* – it somehow took everything good about the original and replaced it with goat poo.

So why would we want more? Glad you asked...

“WE’RE GETTING THE BAND BACK TOGETHER.”

A third movie was often talked about by creators/writers/actors Dan Aykroyd and Harold Ramis but never made. Surprisingly it was Aykroyd (who looks like he ate the Dan Aykroyd from *The Blues Brothers* – remember when he was the skinny one?) who decided that

everyone was getting a bit too long in the tooth and wide in the belt to be lugging around the spook-zapping gear. Plus Bill Murray didn't want to do it. So Dan turned to the video game arena where no one has to age or pork up.

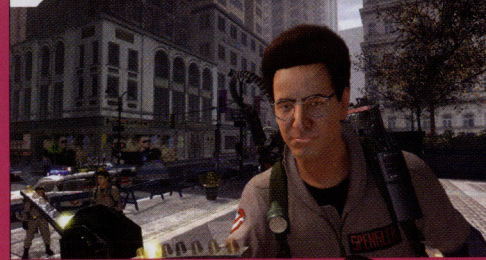
“WHEN SOMEONE ASKS IF YOU’RE A GOD, YOU SAY, ‘YES!’”

If you've seen the excellent trailer you'll know that fan favourites Slimer, the library ghost and even the Stay Puft Marshmallow Man all put in an appearance. In the case of Stay Puft he seems really pissed off, hurling cars, punching buildings and generally being a dick. However, this isn't a rehash of the first movie – there are plenty of original mini-bosses and fresh ghosties to keep you busy. Dan Aykroyd has gone on record to say, “If you've been waiting for *Ghostbusters III*, well – this is it.”

“WE CAME, WE SAW, WE KICKED ITS ASS!”

Is it just us, or is the plot pretty good? Trip on this: it's 1991, two years after *GBII*. You, the player, are a new recruit to the Ghostbusters. Your job? Test

“We had part of a Slinky. But I straightened it”



“I hate Jell-O”



Egon Spengler (Ramis) and Ray Stanz's (Aykroyd) new equipment. They need more Ghostbusters as Paranormal activity is rising all over the city. It's kicked into gear by a Gozer exhibit. Quite why anyone would want to exhibit a pissed off Sumerian God is a mystery and may even be a twist – as Vigo, the painting of doom from *GBII* gets a look in as well. But it doesn't stop there – due to events we know not of, the evil ghost dimension, looks like it wants to come into ours.

“BUSTIN’ MAKES ME FEEL GOOD!”

It'd be nice if *GB* had four-player co-op and it may well – but frankly we don't give that much of a hoot as long as we get to use proton packs to zap these lost souls with a stream of pure energy. Also there are a number of different, new, weapons that look absolutely bitchin' and rad! What? They talked like that in the '80s.

“DON’T CROSS THE [NARRATIVE] STREAMS”

This may strain the brains of some of you, readers, but cartoon spin-offs were



Two in the box "Ready to go" "We be fast" "They be slow"

all over the shop. Firstly there was the really horrible one on the ABC, with the theme song: "Let's go, Ghostbusters, let's go, LET'S GO!" This featured two humans and a trained gorilla. Yes, maybe Filmmation revamped a '70s property with the same name but it was just bad. Watching it, the phrase "...and the living envied the dead" finally made sense. However *The REAL Ghostbusters* (so called for legal reasons) came along and though some of the character's voices and hair were changed it was a really good cartoon. Imaginative, comparatively sophisticated – it was a quality toon like ALF. Remember that one? It was about his life pre-sitcom and pre-Melmac – his home planet – exploding.

TOONS FOR THE MEMORIES

After two years of consistently cool and imaginative *REAL Ghostbusters* the show was retitled *Slimer!* and the *REAL Ghostbusters*. They do actually show how Slimer goes from a hotel wrecking, grub gorging, green blob to a good, gorging green blob in an episode called 'Citizen Ghost'. This third season proved to be the last and weakest. Yet due to comics and a love of all things Ghostbusters a third toon was cobbled together, called – and we're not joking here – *Extreme Ghostbusters*. It was actually anything but extreme, Egon lives with Slimer (oh when will those two engage in the love that dare not speak its name?) and due to a lack of supernatural activity Egon basically keeps the joint

"HE SLIMED ME"

Behold the evolution of Slimer, from puppet to translucent cinematic nemesis to cranky cartoon hero. He also made an excellent toy, or "collectible figurine" if you're living in geek denial.



clean and teaches at a local Uni. Of course ghosts soon need busting. Again, so Egon uses willing students as a new generation of busters is born. Additional Info: Slimer was voiced by Billy West of *Futurama*, *Ren & Stimpy* and *Doug* fame.

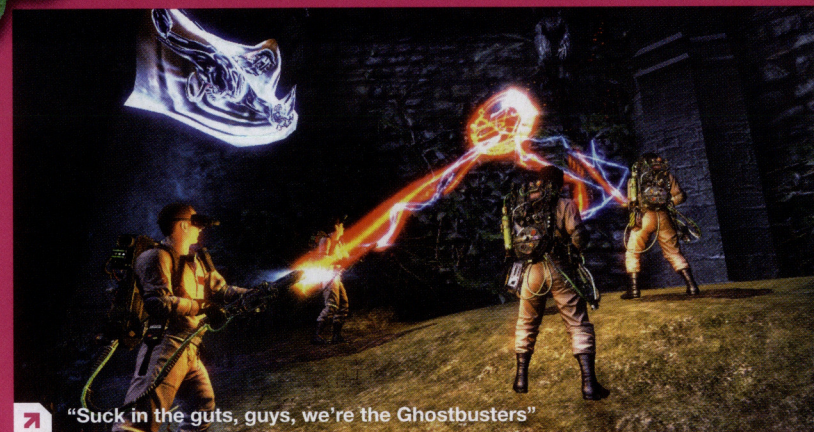
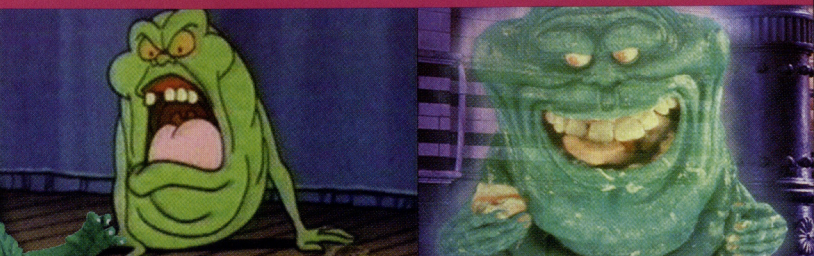
THERE IS NO DANA, ONLY ZUUL!

Even if you only loved the first movie – and knew nothing of the comics and cartoons – the anticipation is almost unbearable. The graphics look awesome and the big action set pieces are, well, big and actiony. Plus how sweet will it be slicing ol' Stay Puft into many delicious pieces.

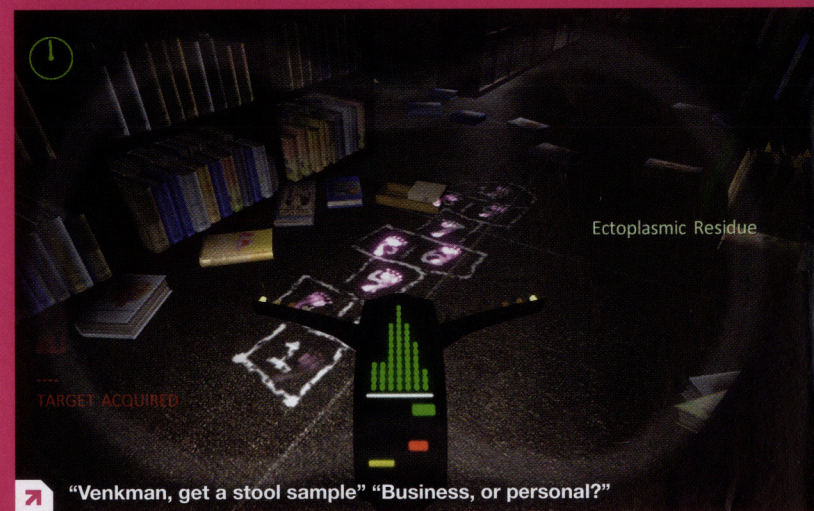
There's a lot of hope, hype and expectation for *Ghostbusters: The Video Game* and from what we've seen it's well deserved. So 25 years later we might just feel the magic again. Maybe it's true what they say: What Gozer round comes around. HOHOHO... oh God... we are so alone. **Anthony O'Connor**

FUN FACT

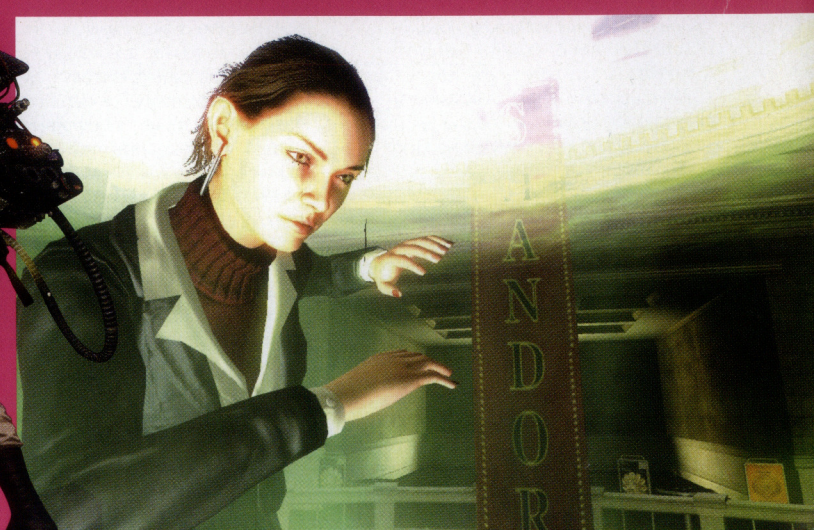
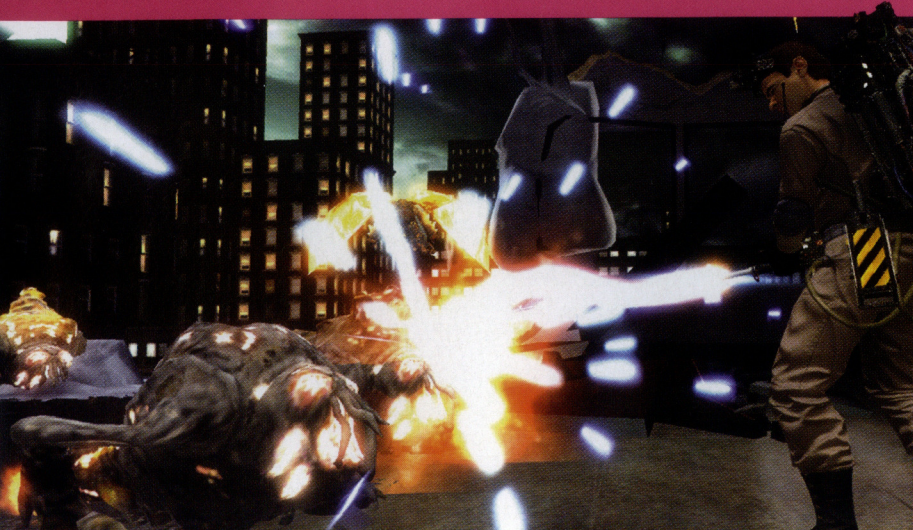
As a youngster watching Ghostbusters, we found the chick who played Gozer extremely attractive.



"Suck in the guts, guys, we're the Ghostbusters"



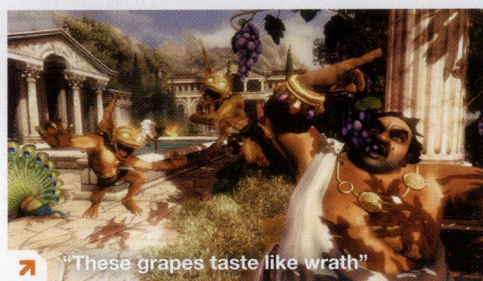
"Venkman, get a stool sample" "Business, or personal?"



INCOMING

Overlord II

“It looks like something out of *Asterix* — and they’ll thrash you, if you let them”



PS3 GENRE: ADVENTURE | RELEASE: JUNE 2009 | DISTRIBUTOR: ATARI | DEVELOPER: TRIUMPH STUDIOS

OVERLORD II

Rome wasn't destroyed in a day...

So, can your minions really club baby seals to death? The trailer is ambiguous on the subject, only showing one of your despicable little servants running after one, cudgel in hand. But closer examination of the screenshots yields the answer. In the first *Overlord* game, one of the trademark minion moves was to steal the weapons and clothes of those they've slain, lending a rag-tag look to your sniveling forces.

The trend continues — minions are clearly shown wearing winter hats shaped like saggy, distorted seal heads, clearly the result of ripping the fur right off their still-warm skulls. So yes, you can indeed murder baby seals. Or rather, your minions do the dirty deeds. For you are the Overlord, and the Overlord is the master of... delegation!

This worthy sequel ups the

stakes, ups the power, and ups the evil. It also broadens the scope, building up the sense that it's an authentic, multi-layered fantasy universe that you're defiling.

It's now been established that *Overlords* have a life cycle. The *Overlord* game for Wii will be a prequel to the antics of the original game, starring a completely different demon king; *Overlord II* introduces a third. Rhianna Pratchett lends her competent writing chops to the task; with the blood of the creator of *Discworld* coursing through her veins, and his reputation the lifeblood of her career, it's natural her thoughts should turn to succession management.

IT'S LIKE...

Overlord



Asterix





That bloke in the centre? Tried to initiate a high five and got left hanging. He's dead, last we heard



Baby seals < Seal (the singer)

Sure, being Overlord is a great job to have. For a while. It's wicked: they get to order around an army of minions, kit out a castle with loot, and have their way with a battery of wenches.

But eventually, it all comes to an end, and each in turn plunges into eternal damnation.

But the line continues — the last Overlord managed to spunk out some demon seed before he perished,

knocking up one of his hussy retainers. As the game begins, you're the result of this ungodly union. You start as... the Overlad.

No bigger than a minion yourself, this tutorial stage sees you in the hoody-wearing, angsty-poetry-writing phase of the protagonist's development. Seeking you out to replace their fallen leader, the minions give you some simple spatial challenges to establish the measure of your villainy. Once you have the hang of the controls, the game proper begins... and the larger changes become apparent.

The first *Overlord* game gave you plenty of opportunities to kill people and break their stuff, and subsequently there were moral choices about how evil you wanted to be. Many gamers resented this ethical dimension, and they had a point. As a fantastical villain at the spearhead of gibbering demonic army, goodness, even in relative terms, is not on your agenda.

Hence the new system, where amorality is constant, and merely changes form.

You can choose from two slightly different types of evil: domination and destruction. With the former, you enslave your victims. Conquered villages become like the vassal states of Mordor, their peasants suffering horribly under your diabolical oppression.

The path of destruction is self-explanatory. You leave nothing but ashes in your wake.

Boss monsters return; warped targets for your politically incorrect impulses. Baby seals are just the beginning — you can kill panda bears, and even yeti. The ultimate foe, however, is man. For times are changing, and civilisation and progress are purging supernatural whimsy from the land. The Glorious Empire, a transparent parody of Imperial Rome, is on the march.

In their formations of legionnaires, your minion army has met its match. Where your own followers are a slaving, pillaging, unpredictable horde, these soldiers fight with ruthless efficiency. Their archers will rain death from a distance, while their spearmen close in, their shields locking in turtle formations.

It looks like something out of *Asterix* — and they'll thrash you, if you let them.

With this added pressure, the need for effective tactics is greater than ever. Thus you must deploy your four different kinds of minions with adroit malice, and purse their combat upgrades to the full. Like the goblin cavalry in *LotR*, they can now ride on wolves, and assorted fantasy beasts; another backhanded deference to Tolkien's opus.

The four basic classes of minions



Don't get busted carrying pot



GETTING PERSONAL

Not only will your goblin minions be smarter, stronger, and more foul-mouthed than ever, they'll also be customisable. If you take a liking to any eccentric little freaks in particular, you can name them. Then, if they should perish in the carrying out of your foul wishes, you can resurrect them in the special Minion Graveyard zone.

return, their abilities and AI enhanced. The Browns are still your front-line fighting force; judicious use of the fireball-shooting Reds, stealthy Greens, and healing Blues is essential for victory. As before, they adopt a 'horde mentality', pillaging and slaying like a force of nature.

Another prospect that genuinely excites: open warfare. This involves your slightly more intelligent minions directing siege weapons to smash entire formations of enemy troops. Basically, the restraints of standard action/adventure gameplay no longer apply, as you can engage enemy armies of up to 50 soldiers in a full-on battle royale. To go balls deep into Helm's Deep, as it were.

While gameplay has been streamlined to broaden the appeal of the franchise, its sick disposition is intact. We cannot confirm at this stage if your minions will still urinate on persons and property, but you will indeed have the opportunity to build up a harem of scheming shrews back at your dark castle; all the better to sire a protagonist for *Overlord III*.

The first *Overlord* was an unexpected delight. Hopefully the sequel will attract the larger audience it deserves; the world is hardly short of those with destructive, deviant urges, craving an outlet...

James Cottee

WE SAY

- Fab gameplay, refined & enhanced
- Smarter, synchronized enemies
- Toilet humour, sexism

OPS IS...
Goblin it up!



KONAMI



PRECIOUS METAL



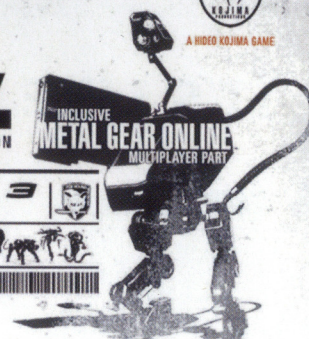
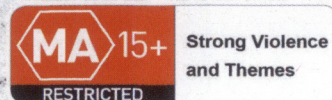
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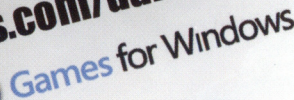
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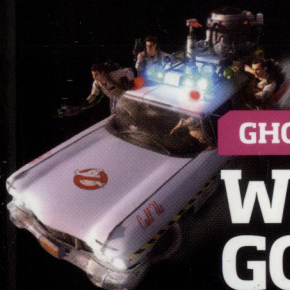
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